

MOTIVATING CHURCH HEALTH
WITH THEOLOGY

VOLUME 1

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¹ John Wooden and Steve Jamison, *Wooden on Leadership* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2005), 124.

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Sola Dei Gloria

(For God's Glory Alone)

ABSTRACT

Motivating Church Health with Theology

Society is changing at a phenomenal rate. The way the church responds to change impacts how effectively the church can minister amidst the ever-changing demographics and values of the emergent culture. The challenge before the church is to theologically reflect and adapt its presentation of the unchanging Gospel to connect faithfully with a new generation. The fact that over 80% of established churches in America are stagnant in membership or in decline suggests that most churches are not adapting to change successfully.

This project demonstrates a significant relationship between exposing parishioners to the biblical theology underlying recommended changes and their increased willingness to implement recommended changes. Those who participated in small groups were even more willing to implement recommended changes. A Biblical and theological overview of motivating change with theology is followed by a synopsis of contemporary resources for implementing change.

A Natural Church Development survey used in this case study revealed a weakness that neither the congregation nor the pastor would have self-diagnosed. A Biblical rationale for Natural Church Development's eight quality characteristics of a healthy church is included in the appendix.

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Purpose of Study

This case study examines parishioners' resistance to implementing change within the local church context. It seeks to determine if a relationship exists between parishioners' understanding of the theological rationale for the recommended changes and the parishioners' motivation to implement these changes. It hypothesizes that parishioners will be more willing to implement recommended changes when they receive an increased understanding of the biblical rationale for the recommended changes. This hypothesis will be tested in this author's church ministry setting by examining the level of motivation expressed by parishioners to implement changes recommended by a Natural Church Development survey before and after they received a theological rationale for the recommended changes.

Importance of Study

This study is designed to examine if a link exists between a parishioner's increased understanding of biblical theology related to a proposed ecclesiastical

change and a parishioner's willingness to implement that change. This investigation is important for two reasons.

First, this writer's personal ministry context required responding to resistance to recommended changes. This writer is the Senior Pastor of Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA. When this writer and the leadership team of Christ Church began to implement recommended changes from a Natural Church Development survey, a number of members resisted these efforts.

Dialogue with resistant members revealed the foundational reason for their resistance was their view of Natural Church Development as an empirical tool which they considered 'too worldly' and 'not spiritual enough to trust.' These resisters were motivated by a commitment to biblical teachings rather than sociological research. Sociological research tools, such as a Natural Church Development survey and its implementation guidelines, designed to facilitate healthier corrective attitudes and practices, were seen as antithetical to Holy Spirit-led prayer, Bible study and application of scriptural teaching. Therefore, these members felt that these empirical tools were deserving of their resistance.

It became clear to this writer that in order to implement the changes recommended by the Natural Church Development assessment, these resistant members needed a biblical rationale for proceeding with Natural Church Development. In order to do that, Natural Church Development's eight quality characteristics were first examined to determine if each is consistent with biblical theology. This writer then prepared a biblical and theological rationale for each of the eight quality characteristics in lay terms. This resource, which is included in

the appendix, was published as the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*.

Second, the results of this study are important to the larger Church. Lessons learned from this study may be applicable to the 85 percent of established churches in America that are stagnant in membership or in decline.² Leaders who propose changes will face resistance.³ Faithful leaders introduce changes based on sound biblical theology. This study will be instructive to church leaders facilitating change in their churches by demonstrating that effectively communicating these theological underpinnings to the congregation throughout the process of implementing ecclesiastical change, parishioners' resistance to change and its consequences will be reduced.

Some evangelical churches could benefit from implementing the recommendations of a Natural Church Development survey may be wary of this empirical tool with scant biblical references. Evangelical Christians may find Schwarz's publications introducing Natural Church Development lack sufficient scriptural citations. For example, Christian's Schwarz's *The ABC's of Natural Church Development*, a brief primer on the eight quality characteristics, does not provide any Scripture reference until page 20 of this 28 page booklet. Some members may perceive Schwarz's reticence to include biblical references as due to Natural Church Development lacking biblical merit.

² Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry* (Monrovia, CA: Church Growth, Inc., 1988), 16, as cited in Aubrey Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins: How to Change a Church Without Destroying It* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 13.

³ Leith Anderson, as cited in Aubrey Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, 9.

In order to address these issues, this writer compiled the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*, which is included in the appendix, as a resource to motivate the congregation of Christ Church through theology. The biblical and theological rationale for each of the eight quality characteristics is developed and illustrated in lay terms. This writer asserts that laity will be more willing to implement recommended changes when they are provided with a clear biblical rationale for those changes.

Although this case study utilized Natural Church Development as its primary resource for determining recommended changes, this study is not limited to Natural Church Development. This study is concerned with motivating the process of ecclesiastical change with biblical theology, whether recommended changes are derived from the results of a Natural Church Development survey, a consultant, a self-assessment or another credible source.

Statement of the Problem

Parishioners in conservative congregations can be resistant to implementing change. This project will seek to determine if a relationship exists between parishioners' understanding of the theological rationale for ecclesiastical changes proposed by their leadership and parishioners' motivation to implement these changes.

Research and Hypothesis

The goal of this case study is to determine if a relationship exists between parishioners' understanding of the theological rationale for ecclesiastical changes

proposed by their leadership and parishioner's motivation to implement these changes. Specifically, this case study will investigate whether or not the parishioners of Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA, as they are exposed to biblical theology underlying the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development, experience an increase in their willingness to implementing recommended changes. The thesis states: Increased exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes will increase parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes.

Testing this hypothesis requires two primary tasks: first, increasing the congregation's exposure to the biblical theology underlying the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and second, assessing any affect this has on congregants' willingness to implement recommended changes.

In order to increase the congregation's exposure to the biblical theology underlying the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development, this writer researched the biblical theology underlying each of the eight quality characteristics and planned several strategies to share this information with the congregation.

An assessment tool was devised in the form of a survey to measure the parishioners' exposure to the various modes of teaching biblical theology. The survey was also used to assess the level of congregants' resistance to implement recommended changes. Correlations and cross tabulations between the degree of exposure to biblical theology and the level of congregants' willingness to implement recommended changes were calculated.

The nature of the congregants' resistance requires investigation in order to determine how to motivate resistant congregants. As senior pastor of Christ Church, this writer recognized that some members saw this empirical tool as "too worldly" to be utilized by a Holy Spirit-led, biblical church. Evidence supporting their resistance included Christian's Schwarz's *The ABC's of Natural Church Development*, a brief primer on the eight quality characteristics. This booklet was distributed to the leadership and other interested members of Christ Church. *The ABC's of Natural Church Development* does not provide any Scripture reference until page 20 of this 28 page booklet. As an empirical scientist, Schwarz deliberately seeks to conduct as unbiased an approach to the quality characteristics as possible. Schwarz is reluctant to label the quality characteristics as "biblical principles" because they were determined by empirical observation rather than through Bible study.⁴ Schwarz recognizes that "the Bible clearly teaches about each of the eight quality characteristics."⁵ However, he chooses not to risk limiting the applicability of Natural Church Development by introducing biblical exposition that would be inconsistent with the theology of one or more segments of the global ecumenical audience he serves.

Schwarz's biblical reticence was perceived by some members of Christ Church as due to Natural Church Development lacking biblical merit. These members resisted implementing changes recommended by Natural Church Development due to the absence of a thorough and compelling biblical rational,

⁴ Christian Schwarz, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development: Experience All That God has Designed You To Be* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2005), 105.

⁵ Ibid.

replete with Scripture references, for each of the eight quality characteristics. This writer asserts that laity will be more willing to implement recommendations of a Natural Church Development survey when they are provided with a clear biblical rationale for the validity of the eight quality characteristics. This required this writer to research the biblical theology underlying each characteristic to share with the congregation.

The theology undergirding the recommendations made as a result of the Natural Church Development survey was compiled in the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*, which is included in the appendix. The biblical and theological rationale for each of the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development is developed and illustrated in lay terms. This book is intended to be read individually and then discussed with other parishioners in a small group. A small group study guide as well as a leaders' guide for each of the eight chapters is included as an aid to small group facilitators.

The choice of a home group as the format to expose parishioners to the theological underpinnings of Natural Church Development provided many benefits. First, in addition to the cognitive presentation of information, which is also accomplished through preaching, newsletter articles, and reading the book independently, the cognitive presentation by the small group facilitator reinforced the information with participants by providing yet another exposure to it.⁶

⁶ Bernard L. Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers: Motivational Models for Managers and Supervisors* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book company, 1982), 107.

Cognitive presentation is the initial step in behavior modeling, where basic concepts are learned along with the action necessary to apply these concepts to real life situations.

Second, small groups provide a setting conducive to modeling new concepts to specific applications, whether through discussion or role play. When small group members agree to participate in an impromptu role play, they are able to practice applying the concept in a specific situation.⁷ Small groups provide immediate feedback and reinforcement through praise, approval, encouragement and attention as concepts are discussed and applied in a supportive environment.⁸ Enthusiasm can be contagious. Assignments between group meetings are strategic opportunities to enable participants to transfer concepts to daily life applications.⁹ Small group leaders as well as pastors and all in church leadership are wise to continually reinforce the application of these concepts long after the study is completed so these changes endure.¹⁰

A third benefit of having parishioners meet in one another's homes is that this enabled parishioners to develop relationships with other members outside of Sunday morning. This process of developing relationships outside of Sunday

⁷ Behavioral rehearsal is also called structured role playing, which "allows the trainees to practice a new behavior pattern in increasingly difficult situations." Ibid, 109.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 109-110.

¹⁰ Goldstein and Sorcher note that behavior "modeling alone is insufficient because, though it yields many positive effects, they are often not enduring effects." Rosenbaum, applying behavior modeling to the work context, continues, "The value of rehearsal, feedback, and the rapid transfer of newly learned skills to the job should not be underestimated." Goldstein, A. P., and Sorcher, M. *Changing Supervisor Behavior* (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1974), as cited in Ibid, 110.

morning is one of the recommended changes resulting from the Natural Church Development survey.

Beyond human interaction, the work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any fruitful study of the Scriptures.¹¹ In addition to the Holy Spirit's illumination, Calvin recognizes that when believers gather together, they collectively benefit from the many different spiritual gifts present, "with a far fuller and richer treasure of heavenly wisdom than each one separately."¹²

In addition to home group studies, other methods were employed at Christ Church to expose parishioners to the theology undergirding the recommended changes. The congregation was exposed to biblical theology on the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development through the pastor's preaching for eight weeks. These sermons coincided with the eight week home group sessions. The pastor also wrote a number of newsletter articles addressing the biblical theology of church health. This latter means of exposure was not a thorough treatment of all eight quality characteristics. However, these newsletter articles did contribute to the overall climate of exposure to the biblical theology of church health.

This writer devised a survey, found in the appendix, to assess any significant relationship between exposure to biblical theology on church health and attitudes toward or participation in efforts to implement recommended

¹¹ John Calvin said, "For even if [scripture] wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit." See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 1, 1.7.5. John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. and indexed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 80.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.11 v 2, 1159-1160.

changes. The survey used a Likert scale to determine the degree of exposure to the various ways biblical theology was presented. One question assessed the number of chapters read in the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*. Another question assessed the number of small group sessions in which the respondent participated. Another question assessed the number of worship services the respondent attended.

These results were then compared with the respondent's reporting any change in their willingness to become involved at church. One question asked specifically how willing the respondent would be to participate by examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score, or minimum factor, and to pray and strategize ways to improve church health. Another question asked specifically how willing the respondent would be to participate by implementing recommended changes to improve church health. Another question assessed the respondent's attitude toward making changes in the way the church operates. Another question assessed the respondent's attitude toward making changes in the way the church operates based on the recommendations of a Natural Church Development survey.

Definitions

Bipolarity refers to the mutual give and take between dynamic and static forces.

Chiasm or chiasmus, is a syntactic structure that inverts normal word order, especially in Hebrew poetry.

Church growth refers to increased church worship attendance.

Church Growth Movement was initiated by Donald McGavran, whose 1959 publication, *How to Grow a Church*, focused on missionaries planting growing churches.¹³ The Church Growth Movement flourished from the early 1970's to the mid 1990's in the United States as McGavran's church growth principles were popularized by C. Peter Wagner, Win Arn, Carl F. George, Elmer Towns and others who applied these principles to local church growth.

Church health is the overall quality of church life, including, but not limited to, a sufficient level of each of the eight quality characteristics of church health as defined by Natural Church Development.

Dynamic refers to organic forces of growth and vitality in the church.

Ecclesiastical change means to modify the structure, mission, vision, purpose or otherwise re-order local church life.

Empirical refers to evidence based on observation and experiment rather than theory alone.

Inclusio is a literary devise that frames a unit of text, known as bracketing, by placing similar material at each end of the unit of text.

Increased theological understanding refers to exposure to biblical teaching that leads to insight into the scriptural rationale for a particular action or perspective, such as the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development.

Liminal Strand comes from the Latin *limen*, meaning “threshold,” refers to the transitional time when the old is no longer, but the new has yet to materialize.

¹³ Donald McGavran, *How to Grow A Church*, 2nd ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1976).

Minimum factor is the quality characteristic that receives a church's lowest score.

Motivation refers to the means used to influence another's behavior.

Narratio refers to a narrative portion in a rhetorical presentation.

Natural Church Development refers to the empirical study of church health begun by Christian A. Schwarz to determine "the universal principles that are the basis for every kind of church growth."¹⁴

Quality characteristics are the eight different keys to church health present to a sufficient degree in every healthy, growing church, as discerned by Christian Schwarz in Natural Church Development.¹⁵

Resistance means the refusal to accept or comply with something.

Rhetoric is a communication devise used to argue a point or persuade an audience.

Sorites is an interlocking chain of points in a rhetorical presentation.

Spiritualistic refers to an extreme position that is suspicious of planning, goals and programs, seeing such as unspiritual.

Static refers to administrative, technical or "man-made" structures.

Technocratic is an extreme position that overestimates the value of programs and underestimates the role of God in church life.

Theology refers to a biblical rationale consistent with orthodox evangelical thought.

¹⁴ Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to the Eight Quality Characteristics of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 4th ed., 2000), 17.

¹⁵ Schwarz, *Color Your World with Natural Church Development*, 104.

Trinitarian Compass recognizes the three Persons of the Trinity as representing three dimensions of the Christian life that are essential for a complete, mature or balanced faith.¹⁶ Schwarz assigns a color to each dimension: red, the Jesus dimension is the proactive side focusing on evangelism and discipleship; green, the God dimension is the reflective side focusing on tolerance and social justice; blue, the Holy Spirit dimension is the affective side focusing on emotional health and spiritual power.”¹⁷

Assumptions

This researcher assumes that the Bible is true, the Word of God preserved without error in its original autographs, able to affect positive change in people when heard, read, received, believed and acted upon.

This researcher assumes the context for this case study is a conservative evangelical congregation and therefore that all lay people in the church will recognize and respect the authority of Scripture as God’s inspired Word.

This researcher assumes that individuals can be motivated to change their behavior.

This researcher assumes laity will be willing to participate in educational venues made available to expose them to biblical theology.

Natural Church Development is assumed to be a valid assessment tool of the eight quality characteristic of church health that it examines. The scientific

¹⁶ The Trinitarian Compass is defined in Schwarz, Ibid, 45ff.

¹⁷ Ibid, 46-47.

integrity and statistical validity of Natural Church Development will not be scrutinized in this study.¹⁸

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to a case study format focusing on Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA. As a result, lessons learned from this study may be helpful to other churches in a conservative, evangelical context among the 85 percent of established churches in America that are stagnant in membership or in decline. However, the only congregation actually surveyed is Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA.

The scope of this project will seek to determine if a relationship exists between a parishioner's understanding of the theological rationale for ecclesiastical changes proposed by their leadership and the parishioner's motivation to implement these changes. The theological rationale is specifically limited to the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and recommendations derived from survey results to make ecclesiastical changes to improve the church's health. The scientific integrity of Natural Church Development will not be scrutinized in this study.¹⁹ This researcher assumes other factors can motivate, such as the personality of the leader, etc. This study is limited to examining exposing people to theology and its affect on increasing parishioners' willingness to implement change.

¹⁸ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 40-41.

¹⁹ Ibid, 16-19.

This study did not utilize a valid pre-test to provide an initial level of resistance to proposed changes. The survey instrument is dependent upon respondent's assessment of their degree of willingness to implement proposed changes.

Summary

This chapter introduced the purpose and importance of this case study examining parishioners' resistance to implementing change within the local church context. It hypothesizes that parishioners will be more willing to implement recommended changes when they receive an increased understanding of the biblical rationale for the recommended changes. Two primary tasks for testing this hypothesis were identified: first, increasing the congregation's exposure to the biblical theology underlying the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and second, assessing any affect this has on congregants' willingness to implement recommended changes. The strategy to research this issue was detailed. Definitions of terms used in this paper were provided, as well as assumptions made in order to conduct the study. The scope and limitations of the study were identified.

Now the biblical and theological issues raised by this project need to be examined. What does the Bible say about motivating change?

Chapter 2

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Biblical and theological issues raised by this project will be examined in this chapter. This writer asserts that biblical theology solidly supports this project.

Accounts of God and people motivating change with theology will be presented and examined. First, this chapter will present an introductory theology of God's special revelation. In particular, the authority of the Word of God in Scripture and Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection as authoritative for the church's faith and practice will be presented.

Second, the biblical grounds for assessing the need for change will be examined. Determining a biblically sound hermeneutic for assessing conformity to biblical principles is necessary for the church to avoid heresy and maintain faithful viability.

Third, this chapter will examine biblical illustrations of change in general as well as God-initiated change and people's resistance to divinely ordained change. Biblical examples of leaders coping with such resistance will also be presented.

Fourth, biblical instances of motivating change with theology will be examined. These scriptural accounts will be presented demonstrating how God the Father motivates change using theology. Then scriptural accounts will be presented demonstrating how God the Son motivates change using theology. Three characteristics will be highlighted, including evidence of Jesus sharing (1) an authentic message, (2) presenting Himself as an authentic messenger, and (3) clearly communicating His message. Scriptural accounts will then be presented demonstrating how people in the Old and New Testaments motivate change using theology. These accounts include biblical instances of individuals proclaiming the Word of the Lord generally and also with a particular intent. Biblical illustrations of people motivating God to change using theology will also be presented. An incident where God motivates people to resist hurtful change will also be included.

God's Special Revelation

God is First

God is the prime Motivator.²⁰ People are drawn to faith, regenerated, sanctified, and live in fellowship with God and other believers at God's initiative.²¹ God motivates and leads believers by His Word in Scripture and

²⁰ In contrast to Schleiermacher and his view of God as "Absolute Causality," this writer recognizes God as transcendent as well as immanent. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 194f. Also see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* Fourth Revised and Enlarged Edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 24.

²¹ John 6:44f., 65. Calvin says, "The Lord by his Spirit directs, bends, and governs, our heart and reigns in it as in his own possession." Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.10, 303.

through the Holy Spirit.²² It is the Holy Spirit Who leads people to faith in Jesus Christ, for no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord!’ apart from the Holy Spirit.²³ God’s promises are realized as the Spirit comes, giving new hearts to the people of God in the New Covenant.²⁴ “The church is therefore the people of God and the assembly of Christ because it is the fellowship of the Spirit.”²⁵

Scripture is the Word of God

Scripture is rightly called “the Word of God,” for, as the Apostle Paul says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”²⁶ Polycarp considered the Scriptures “the very voice of the Most High.”²⁷ John Calvin asserts that all that is taught “in Scripture ‘without exception,’ shall be humbly received by us, -- that the Scriptures as a whole shall be received by us with the same reverence which we give to God, ‘because they have emanated from him alone, and are mixed with nothing human.’”²⁸

²² John 16:13 *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985). All subsequent Scripture references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

²³ 1 Cor. 12:3.

²⁴ Ez. 36:25-28.

²⁵ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church, Contours of Christian Theology*. Ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 51.

²⁶ 2 Tim. 3:16-17 . The Apostle Peter recounts God’s voice on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Pt. 1:16-18) as evidence that the apostolic testimony was revealed by God. He concludes, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pt. 1:21 .)

²⁷ Polycarp, *Adv. Haer.* 2.28, as cited in Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948), 108.

²⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.18; *Commentary on Romans*, 15:4; and on 2 Tim. 3:16, as cited in Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, 108-109.

Holy Spirit Illumination

Believers look to God's Word in Scripture but also rely on the illumination of the Holy Spirit in order to discern the mind and will of God. Donald Bloesch says, "Only holy Scripture as it is interpreted by the Spirit can be viewed as the fount of eternal wisdom, the final norm for faith and practice."²⁹ The Holy Spirit "illumine[s] the minds of believers to perceive the truth of his teaching."³⁰ The Holy Spirit, Who "searches all things, even the deep things of God," illuminates the Christian's reading of God's Word and provides insight into God's will and purpose.³¹ Calvin says, "It is through the Spirit that we come to grasp 'the mind of Christ' [I Cor 2:16]."³²

Church by "The Book"

Believers personally order their lives by God's Word through the illumination of The Holy Spirit. Likewise, corporately, as the Body of Christ, believers rely upon Scripture and the Spirit's illumination. Speaking of the church, Otto Weber says, "The Community lives by the Word."³³ Whatever teaching or practice is introduced in the church must be consistent with what God has revealed in Scripture. Calvin is clear that the authority of the church is

²⁹ Donald Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 31-32.

³⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.8.13, 1162.

³¹ 1 Cor. 2:10 .

³² Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, 3.2.34, 582

³³ Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, Trans. and ann. Darrell L. Guder, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 516.

attached to the Word of God. “The only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word.”³⁴

A church that is led by God through Scripture and the Holy Spirit will operate week to week and implement any changes based upon procedures or recommendations having biblical merit. A truly Scriptural church will not operate simply by majority rule or in compliance to a compelling leader. The church is not to teach or live by unfounded or worldly notions, but, following Jesus’ example, speak only what the Father has revealed in His Word.³⁵ The Reformers maintained that a true church must be apostolic, founded upon the doctrine of the apostles preserved in the Canon.³⁶ Using the apostles’ teachings, the Reformers determined biblical and spiritual attributes of the true church of Christ, as evidenced by “true preaching of the Word, proper observance of the sacraments, and faithful exercise of church discipline.”³⁷

True Church Growth Consists of Spreading the Word of God

“The growth of the church,” notes Edmund P. Clowney, “is described by Luke as the growth of the Word.³⁸ The ministries by which the church is built up are ministries of the Word.³⁹ The apostolicity of the church, therefore, means that the church is built on the foundation of the apostolic gospel. All other attributes of

³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.8.8, 1155.

³⁵ (John 12:49-50, 14:10), Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.8.13, 1163.

³⁶ 1 Cor. 3:10-11; Eph 2:20; 3:4-5.

³⁷ Clowney, *The Church*, 101.

³⁸ Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.

³⁹ Eph. 4:11.

the church derive from this.”⁴⁰ A truly healthy church integrates sound biblical teaching in every aspect of church life and order. Preachers and evangelists serve as heralds as they proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection as atonement for one’s sin, enabling repentant believers to become children of God.⁴¹ The power of the Gospel to change lives is not dependent upon the techniques or skill of any orator, but on the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.⁴²

Christ is the Head of the Church

The church is the Body of Christ, with Jesus being the head.⁴³ Jesus’ headship is not merely rhetorical language, but compels believers to look to Jesus, in prayer and through the Word of God in Scripture, relying on the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth.⁴⁴ Calvin teaches the essence of true church unity “depends upon a unity of faith,” derived from the Word of God, that is decisively “in Christ”.⁴⁵ The Body of Christ is not free to practice current trends that allegedly “work,” but lack credible Scriptural merit. The church’s vitality is dependent upon its oneness with Christ as it lives according to God’s truth. Weber

⁴⁰ Clowney, *The Church*, 102.

⁴¹ Jn. 1:12-13; Eph. 2:4-5, 8-10; Is. 53:11, 55:6-7; Ac. 2:38, 13:39; Rom. 3:23-24, 5:1, 10:17; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 2:16, 3:24.

⁴² Mic. 3:8; Zech. 4:6; Ac. 1:8; Rom. 1:1-5; 15: 13, 17-19; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2:1-5; Eph. 3:16-21; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Ti. 1:7. “We deny that the power of the Gospel rests in the eloquence of the preacher, the technique of the evangelist, or the persuasion of rational argument.” The Committee on Evangelical Unity in the Gospel, “The Gospel Of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration,” *Christianity Today* 43, no. 7 (14 June 1999): 49.

⁴³ Eph. 1:22-23; 4:14-16; 5:23; Col. 1:18; see also Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.6.9, 1110. See also Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 593.

⁴⁴ John 16:13. Calvin says, “The Lord is ever present with his people and governs them by his Spirit.” Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.8.11, 1060.

⁴⁵ Phil. 2:1, 5; Rom. 15:5. Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.2.5, 1047. Contrast Mt 15:9 “in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men.” 4.10.23, v2, 1202.

notes, “The unity of the Community with Jesus Christ therefore is found only in its dependence.”⁴⁶ A healthy church is surrendered to Jesus Christ as Lord, devoted to glorifying Christ and carrying out His commission.

Jesus Christ commissioned the church to carry out God’s unchanging purposes in this ever-changing world.⁴⁷ Otto Weber asserts the imperative to maintain one’s focus on God and seek direction from God rather than any other source when he says, “the Community grows only from its Headship to its membership, and not the reverse.”⁴⁸ Because less than fully sanctified human beings are at work in the church, Anderson says, “prophetic voices must continually call the church back to being the church as defined by Scripture.”⁴⁹

God’s Word Incarnate

Christ’s incarnation demonstrates God’s supernatural intervention into real human life. Continuing the incarnational ministry of Jesus means the church must translate God’s revealed truth in Scripture into relevant action that impacts people’s lives. “As Calvin affirms, the gospel must be heard and heeded as well as proclaimed. There must be a community of believers showing the root of faith in the fruit of love.”⁵⁰ Faithful proclamation of the Word of God anticipates the church following through on its call to outreach. Families must “seek to gather friends and neighbors to Christ in hospitality and quiet witness,” modeling

⁴⁶ Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, v. 2, 512.

⁴⁷ Matthew 28:18-20

⁴⁸ Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, v. 2, 526.

⁴⁹ Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1990, 1998), 119.

⁵⁰ Clowney, *The Church*, 103.

faithfully for their children what living out Christ's Great Commission looks like.⁵¹ The Good Samaritan models God's compassionate love and mercy, expanding our understanding of who is our neighbor.⁵²

The church has had difficulty living out God's revealed truth in relevant ways. Leith Anderson notes the challenge in balancing the tension between the poles of revelation and relevance inherent in incarnational ministry:

The balance and tension between revelation and relevance is what John Stott calls 'two worlds.' Liberal Christians have too often forsaken revelation for relevance, and conservative Christians have forsaken relevance for revelation. Neither is consistent with the incarnation of Jesus. The Son of God was divine and human. To be like Jesus we must not compromise any of the supernatural nor fail to be relevant to our world and generation.⁵³

Applying God's Special Revelation to Motivate Change

Assessing Church Viability and Determining Rehabilitation

Churches need effective tools to accurately assess the viability of their congregation based on biblical principles. Likewise, churches need resources to rehabilitate areas of deficiency to bring them to conformity with God's purpose for the church. When Nehemiah learned that Jerusalem's walls were reduced to rubble, he recognized this situation left the Jewish remnant in the holy city defenseless.⁵⁴ Not only were the Jews in Jerusalem vulnerable to enemy attack, but also to pagan influences upon their life and religion.⁵⁵ As Jeremiah sought the Lord with tears, he not only repented on behalf of his people, but reaffirmed

⁵¹ Clowney. *The Church*, 160.

⁵² Lk. 10:24-37.

⁵³ Anderson, *Dying for Change* 119.

⁵⁴ Neh. 1:1-11.

⁵⁵ Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprint 1979), 1150-1151.

God's covenant through Moses. Nehemiah acted on this vision to not merely restore the walls surrounding the city of Jerusalem, but to restore God's people to faithful obedience to God's covenant, re-establishing temple worship and Jerusalem as the city where God's name dwells.⁵⁶ Through this outward act of reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah set in motion various opportunities to restore the nation of Israel to health and to live in compliance with God's Word.

Bipolarity

Nehemiah and all the Jews that labored on the walls while defending themselves from enemy attack knew the human effort involved in this enterprise. Yet, none would question the reality of God's working in their midst through this process.⁵⁷ These two poles: God's intervention, as one pole, and human initiative according to God's purposes as the other pole, interact to accomplish God's will God's way. This is a biblical illustration of what Christian Schwarz calls "bipolar thinking."⁵⁸

Bipolarity refers to the relationship between two poles that causes a flow of energy resulting in natural self-organization. Schwarz illustrates this with the polarity of genders. "Human reproduction does not need artificial promptings—it happens *all by itself*, simply through the mutual attraction of the 'poles.'"⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Temple worship: Neh. 8:16; 13:8-14. God's name: Neh. 1:9; Dt. 12:5; Ps. 132:13.

⁵⁷ Neh. 4:14-15; 5:9-13; 6:9b; 8-10; 12:27-47.

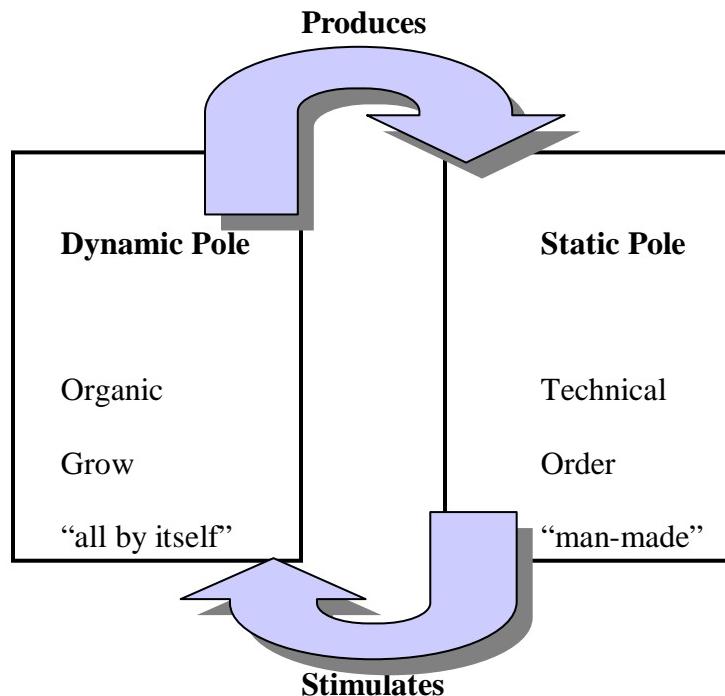
⁵⁸ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 84-85.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 84.

Dynamic and Static Poles

Bipolarity in the New Testament is found when the church is described with both dynamic and static images. Dynamic images are typically organic metaphors, referring to the life or vitality of the church. The idea of growth is inherent in the dynamic, or organic reference to the church as a “body” in 1 Corinthians 12.

Dynamic and Static Poles⁶⁰



Static images are not organic, but refer to administrative, technical or “man-made” structures. Paul uses a static image in 1 Cor. 3:10 when he said, “I

⁶⁰ Ibid, 85.

laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it.”⁶¹ These dynamic and static poles exist in a reciprocal relationship. The growth activity in the dynamic pole produces structure, programs, or some sort of order from the static pole in response. This static support of the dynamic pole’s growth stimulates further growth, necessitating additional static support. In churches where this reciprocal relationship between the dynamic and static poles is working, healthy growth takes place.

Bipolarity in the New Testament

Several New Testament passages combine these dynamic and static metaphors:

Dynamic pole: organic

“you are God’s field,

“so that the body of Christ

“grows

“living

Static pole: technical:

God’s building.” – 1 Cor. 3:9 .

may be built up.” – Eph. 4:12

into a holy temple” – Eph 2:21 NRSV

stones,” – 1 Pet. 2:5

Both dynamic and static poles work together to maintain healthy growth.

Heresy as Truth Taken to the Extreme

Heresy is not necessarily the opposite of truth, but truth taken to an unhealthy extreme.⁶² Methods such as goals, planning, and programs are useful tools in church life. However, to put one’s faith in particular methodologies and

⁶¹ 1 Cor. 3:10 .

⁶² Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 88-95.

human ingenuity to the neglect of the organic reality of the Body of Christ, is to err to a static, or technocratic extreme. The technocratic position overestimates the value of programs and underestimates the role of God in church life. The church is not simply an organization run like a business, but is also an organism with a Divine mandate dependent upon Holy Spirit empowerment.

There is another extreme to beware. God is central to church life. Prayer and trusting God are healthy traits in a church. However, there is a spiritualistic extreme that is suspicious of planning, goals and programs, seeing such as unspiritual.⁶³ This reach beyond the dynamic pole, taken to a spiritualistic extreme, views the issue of church health as totally up to God. All church people can do, according to this spiritualistic paradigm, is pray and wait. Applying this spiritualistic paradigm to Nehemiah, he would have had to remain in Susa praying rather than securing aid from the king and strategizing the complexities involved in organizing the people and resources to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

The Apostle Paul teaches the cooperative integration of God's role and the human element in church life in 1 Corinthians 3:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's

⁶³ Christian Schwarz describes this “spiritualistic paradigm” as dualistic, a view that neglects that God created an orderly universe marked by observable principles. God sustains (Psalm 104:30, Job 34:13-15) the “very good” (Gen. 1:31) world He created, even since the world entered into its currently fallen state. The incarnation (John 1:14) demonstrates God’s commitment to work in and through His creation to redeem fallen humanity. For God to work through the church, even through programs, planning and management in a predictable way is evidence of God’s sustaining Presence. Those from a “spiritualistic paradigm” only recognize the Holy Spirit working in the event of an exception to a recognized principle. See Ibid, 90-91, 106-107.

field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.⁶⁴

Paul is clear that the human laborers' contribution (static pole) pales compared to the miracle God works in germinating a seed to sprout to fruitful life (dynamic pole). Yet, Paul is also clear that quality workmanship will be rewarded. The Apostle then changes analogies from organic to structural. Paul's point remains consistent: that Christ is the sure foundation on which workers build. The quality of their work will be judged accordingly. Paul's analogy inspires those who labor in the church to devote their best assets and energies.

Biblical Theology and Empirical Observation

The organic characteristics of God's created order are noted in Scripture and are observable in the life of the church.⁶⁵ Just as a plant needs water, sun, good soil and nutrients to grow and be healthy, there are growth factors in the Body of Christ that God has established to enable the church to grow "all by itself."⁶⁶ Like tending a garden (static pole), church leaders and parishioners can enhance the growth and vitality of the Body of Christ by ensuring these growth factors (dynamic pole) are present and adequate.

⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 3:6-13 .

⁶⁵ Matt. 6:28, Mk. 4:26-29, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 3:9, 12:27, Eph. 4:11-13.

⁶⁶ Mark 4:28.

Natural revelation reveals the organic growth factors God has established in His creation in order for growth to take place “all by itself.”⁶⁷ Through observation, one can discern factors necessary for growth to take place, and also identify obstacles to growth that need to be removed.⁶⁸ Jesus said, “See how the lilies of the field grow.”⁶⁹ The word “see,” *katamathete*, means to “observe well,” “learn thoroughly,” or “diligently study.”⁷⁰ While instructing us not to worry, but to trust our sovereign God, Jesus calls us to carefully consider the process of growth that takes place in the organic realm. One does not develop a thriving church through a mercenary approach to church growth,⁷¹ but by meditating upon and thoroughly learning just how God provides for every living organism, and dedicating oneself fully to living in harmony with God’s design.

Choosing Biblical Standards over Empirical Observation

Careful observers of church growth characteristics must beware of reverting to mere pragmatism, or what “works” in a particular setting. True church growth characteristics are consistent with God’s nature, and so will conform to sound biblical theology. As Christian Schwarz notes:

Neither the observation of churches nor of nature should ever become the basis for establishing absolute standards. If a concept contradicts biblical truth, Christians should reject it, even if it appears to have been used with ‘success.’ Not everything in nature

⁶⁷ Mark 4:28.

⁶⁸ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 10.

⁶⁹ Matt. 6:28.

⁷⁰ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 414. See also Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 9.

⁷¹ “The church must cease trying to ensure its own survival and begin to share the good news that Christ has come to redeem the whole world.” Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church*, 249.

is a ‘biotic principle’ to be used in Natural Church Development. Our task is to carefully and biblically discern what is theologically legitimate and what is not.⁷²

The Scriptures do not supply specific details for every church procedure.

Rather, God’s Word gives universal principles that may be discerned through scientific inquiry. The starting point is the Word of God, however, and the priorities God has established. This solid foundation enables churches and their leaders to integrate those empirical findings in ways that fit appropriately in God’s design for His church. Edmund Clowney observes:

The Bible does not give a detailed blueprint for all church order, but provides principles that find expression in the varied cultures of the globe. In applying those principles, studies of human behavior are useful... Yet the behavioral sciences cannot be the starting-point for the spiritual order of the church, for those sciences will not support the servant-leader’s self-sacrifice that derives from the theology of the cross, or the appeal to the authority of the Word of God that marks all church order.⁷³

Literary Devices

Motivation using biblical theology requires an understanding of the biblical text. Two literary devices relevant to this study are rhetoric and chiasm.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is a communication devise more credible than the stereotype that dismisses ancient rhetoric as manipulative persuasion at the

⁷² Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 13.

⁷³ Clowney, *The Church*, 111.

expense of truth.⁷⁴ While misuse is not denied, classicist D. A. Russell asserts rhetoric has always been a rigorous discipline that encourages “hard thinking, verbal and logical ingenuity, and shrewd psychological observation.”⁷⁵ He notes rhetoric’s critics overrate Plato’s polemic as well as mistake rhetoric “as basically an art of verbal embellishment, not of reasoning.”⁷⁶

Writing on 1 Corinthians 1-4, Duane Litfin notes, “We must be willing to avail ourselves of a relatively sophisticated understanding of the genius of classical rhetoric if we are to do justice to Paul’s argument.”⁷⁷ The use of rhetoric attributed to biblical personalities and biblical writers will be discussed later in this chapter.

Chiasm

Chiasm traces its roots to early Semitic writing. New Testament scholar Nils W. Lund demonstrated the broad sweep of chiastic structures throughout the biblical text, noting that chiasm “served a liturgical function in the Jewish community.”⁷⁸

In Hebrew poetry chiasmus is a syntactic structure at base which inverts normal word order. It works especially well in a poetry which makes use of parallelism. Holladay says it serves to ‘vary

⁷⁴ Duane Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11-12.

⁷⁵ D. A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 119, as cited in Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, 13.

⁷⁶ Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity*, 119, as cited in Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, 13.

⁷⁷ Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, 17.

⁷⁸ Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 93, as cited in Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 30-31.

the steady drumbeat of the normal [i.e. parallel] pattern.' Syntactic chiasmus is commonly found in all Old Testament poetry.⁷⁹

Uses of chiasm will be presented later in this chapter.

Biblical Instances of Change

The Bible cites numerous instances of change and individuals motivating others to change. Not all change is good. Even in Eden, the paradise garden God planted for Adam, who was later joined by Eve. The serpent used a series of rhetorical questions to undermine God's authority in the mind of the woman, which led to her and Adam disobeying God's command, resulting in their expulsion from Eden and the Fall of humanity.⁸⁰ As fallen creatures, unsavory forms of motivation are employed to change the behavior of others, even in the pages of Scripture.

Negative motivation

Sennacherib attempts to motivate Hezekiah, his officials, army and the people of Jerusalem to serve him rather than rebel. Sennacherib uses intimidation in various forms: (1) Sennacherib presents a large army and three high ranking officials to Hezekiah's officials in view of all Jerusalem to intimidate and persuade,⁸¹ (2) Speaking in the presence and in the language of the masses was intimidating and persuasive,⁸² (3) Their words discredited Hezekiah's present action as untenable,⁸³ (4) Bribes were used as incentives,⁸⁴ (5) Threats were

⁷⁹ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 83.

⁸⁰ Gen. 3:1ff.

⁸¹ 2 Ki. 18:17.

⁸² 2 Ki. 18:26-35.

⁸³ 2 Ki. 18:19-22, 24, 28-35.

made,⁸⁵ (6) Theology was used by presenting Sennacherib's proposal as a divine mandate.⁸⁶

Positive Motivation

Human beings also utilize positive means to motivate others to alter their behavior. Ecclesiastes seeks to motivate restraint in those who would pour their best years and efforts into meaningless pursuits. Rather than using theology, the writer uses his personal experience and observations of natural revelation and human dynamics in order to persuade. Solomon writes that nothing is new,⁸⁷ saying, "Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever."⁸⁸ Wisdom is meaningless⁸⁹ as is pleasure⁹⁰ and labor.⁹¹

Jesus motivated those who would become His disciples to leave their life's commitments to follow Him utilizing various approaches. In the case of Philip and Levi, Jesus simply offers the invitation to "follow me."⁹² There may or may not have been other incidents making that invitation compelling. The miraculous catch of fish⁹³ was a persuasive display of supernatural power. Jesus also cast a compelling vision when He said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you

⁸⁴ 2 Ki. 18:23, 31-32.

⁸⁵ 2 Ki. 18:25, 27.

⁸⁶ 2 Ki. 18:25, 32b-35.

⁸⁷ Ec. 1:2-11.

⁸⁸ Ec. 1:4.

⁸⁹ Ec. 1:12-18.

⁹⁰ Ec. 2:1-16.

⁹¹ Ec. 2:17-26.

⁹² John 1:43; Mat. 9:9, Mk. 2:14, Luke 5:27-28.

⁹³ Luke 5:1-11.

will catch men.”⁹⁴ As a result these fishermen “pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”⁹⁵

The Biblical Message of Change

Change occurs throughout the pages of Scripture. From the very first page, when God said, “Let there be light,” the darkness was transformed as creation began; to the closing pages when a new heaven and a new earth replace the former things.⁹⁶ Since the radical change of humanity’s Fall from holiness into sin in Genesis 3, the rest of Scripture portrays God’s plan to redeem humanity. The Exodus is the classic incident that epitomizes the process of change God utilizes in His redemptive strategy:

It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.⁹⁷

God demonstrated His covenant love through signs and wonders to transform His people from slaves in a pagan culture to His own people who would worship Yahweh faithfully and keep His commandments.

The New Testament ministry of Messiah Jesus and his forerunner, John the Baptist, open with an invitation to change: “Repent, for the kingdom of

⁹⁴ Luke 5:10.

⁹⁵ Luke 5:11.

⁹⁶ Gen. 1:3; Rev. 21:1.

⁹⁷ Dt. 7:8-9.

heaven is near.”⁹⁸ Change is basic to God’s message throughout the New Testament, as Wilder observes the innovative ways God communicates,

In the New Testament also the word or voice of God is seen as effective, and as bringing in a new thing. We have the theme of the incarnate word in John, and of the shining of the light out of darkness by the creative word in Paul, and indeed the constant identification of the Good News with the word. As we have noted, the new Israel was aware of an endowment with new tongues, for God had again called his people and all men to a new face-to-face hearing or interview in the Gospel.⁹⁹

The Gospel, from first to last, is all about divine transformation.

Divinely Ordained Change

Exodus in Three Phases

The scope of the Exodus event, leaving Egyptian slavery, wandering in the wilderness and its culmination with the people of God settling in the Promised Land, illustrates the reality that the people of God are people in transition. God institutes redemptive changes in the lives of His people. Change, as in the case of the Exodus event, is part of God’s plan of redemption.

The Exodus illustrates three identifiable phases in the process of transformation: ‘Ending;’ ‘Liminal Strand;’ and ‘New Beginning.’¹⁰⁰ Ending signifies the process of bringing to an end the old way of doing things. In this case, ending Israel’s years in Egypt as slaves; ‘Liminal Strand,’ from the Latin *limen*, meaning “threshold,” refers to the transitional time in the desert when the

⁹⁸ Matt. 4:17 .; see also Mk. 1:15 and John the Baptist in Matt. 3:2.

⁹⁹ Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 7.

¹⁰⁰ These three phases are adapted by Craig Satterlee from William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2003), 3, as cited in Craig A. Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change: Preaching in Times of Congregational Transition* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005), 8-9.

old is no longer, but the new has yet to materialize; and ‘New Beginning,’ as Israel enters the land of milk and honey, establishing a new order for life.¹⁰¹

The transitional crises, including Egypt’s pursuing army, Israel’s entrapment at the Red Sea, and their daily reliance upon God for food, water and direction, served to unite this new nation with a shared history, culture, and value system under one God. God provided the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law as well as an order for worship so as to maintain relationship with the people of Israel. All this can be traced back to God’s fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham.¹⁰² The Passover celebration commemorated God’s power to deliver His people and served to inspire worship and trust in God for generations to come through the retelling of God’s mighty deeds and the theology undergirding His deliverance.

Abraham In Three Phases

This three-strand process of transitioning occurs in the life of Abraham. The “ending” phase began when God asked Abram to leave his homeland, his people and his extended family for a destination yet to be revealed.¹⁰³ Abram’s life from that point on was lived in the “liminal strand,” as an enduring legacy of trust in God while anticipating a grand promise. Abraham approached the “ending phase” with the birth of his son, Isaac, and God’s delivering Isaac from Mount

¹⁰¹ Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 3, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 7.

¹⁰² Genesis 12:1-3. See also J. Robert Clinton, *The Bible and Leadership Values: A Book by Book Analysis* (Pasadena, CA: by the author, 1993), 59.

¹⁰³ Gen. 12:1ff.

Moriah.¹⁰⁴ However, Abraham is renown for his faith, trusting the promise of God while never seeing it fulfilled fully in his lifetime.¹⁰⁵

Jonah, Paul and Jesus in Three Phases

This three-strand process of transitioning occurs in the life of Jonah. “Jonah’s time in the belly of the fish is an in-between phase that marked an ending and a new beginning in Jonah’s ministry.”¹⁰⁶ Paul’s journey from Jerusalem to Damascus, where he encountered the risen Jesus, initiated an in-between phase that marked an ending of Paul’s life as a persecutor of the church, and lead to a new beginning in Paul’s life as the apostle to the Gentiles.¹⁰⁷

Jesus began His earthly ministry with the message, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”¹⁰⁸ His life as an obscure carpenter ended at this moment, as Messiah Jesus was publicly inaugurated with a divine endorsement at His baptism.¹⁰⁹ This liminal phase continued through Jesus’ death on the cross and burial in the tomb. Jesus’ mighty words and mighty deeds all authenticated His anointing as the Savior of the world, pointing to new beginning initiated by His resurrection from the dead. Jesus’ transition by way of the cross illustrates a new beginning, not only for Jesus, who is now seated at God’s right hand, but for all who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. These examples show that “God’s way

¹⁰⁴ Gen. 21:1-8, 22:1-18; Heb. 11:17-19.

¹⁰⁵ Heb. 11:13-16.

¹⁰⁶ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Acts 9:1ff.; Apostle to the Gentiles: Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8.

¹⁰⁸ Matt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15.

¹⁰⁹ Matt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22.

is usually the more difficult option. Congregations may find that the most faithful way to engage the transition is also the more difficult one.”¹¹⁰

Biblical Examples of Resistance to Change

Resisting change is a reaction documented in Scripture, even when the changes are clearly according to God’s will and initiative. Profound changes occurred as God’s plan of redemption through the Exodus progressed, including: (1) the series of miraculous plagues in Egypt;¹¹¹ (2) God favorably disposed the Egyptians toward the Israelites so they effectively plundered the Egyptians as they left;¹¹² (3) God parted the Red Sea so Israel could safely cross while the pursuing army was destroyed;¹¹³ and (4) God provided manna and quail for the people to eat.¹¹⁴

Recurring resistance plagued the implementation of these changes inherent in Israel’s deliverance to the Promised Land, despite God’s visible leadership in the cloud and fiery pillar as well as this series of miracles.¹¹⁵ The people despaired of life and rebuked Moses for leading them out of Egyptian slavery when they saw Egypt’s pursuing army.¹¹⁶ The rabble complained about the monotony of eating only manna, resisting the changes required in God’s plan of redemption by disparaging the sacrifices necessary during the transitional period

¹¹⁰ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 15.

¹¹¹ Ex. 7-11.

¹¹² Ex. 12:26.

¹¹³ Ex. 14:21-31.

¹¹⁴ Ex. 16:4-18, Nu. 11:31-32.

¹¹⁵ Ex. 13:22.

¹¹⁶ Ex. 14:10-12.

and motivating the people to crave the variety of foods available in Egypt.¹¹⁷ On the threshold of the Promised Land, ten of the scouts lacked faith that God would enable them to conquer the inhabitants of the land.¹¹⁸ These resisters persuaded the rest of the community to join their resistance.¹¹⁹ The people's appeals to Moses to reverse the changes already established by returning to Egyptian slavery were condemned by God.¹²⁰ However, this rebellion at Kadesh Barnea caused the nation to wander in the desert for forty years until a new generation, led by Joshua, entered the Promised Land. Resisting change, or maintaining the status quo, is not always faithful. In this case, God's purposes were simply delayed until a more faithful generation chose to comply with God's plans for change.

Psalm 78 presents God's mercy¹²¹ in the face of Israel's unfaithfulness¹²² in order to motivate Israel to put their trust in God, remember God's deeds, keep God's commands and teach such faithfulness to subsequent generations.¹²³

Recurring Resistance

Maintaining the people's willingness to see the transition through to completion required persistent reassurance through God's miraculous intervention. After successfully crossing the Red Sea and seeing the pursuing army destroyed, Scripture reads, "And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their

¹¹⁷ Nu. 11:4-6.

¹¹⁸ Nu. 13:26-33.

¹¹⁹ Nu. 13:32-14:4.

¹²⁰ Nu. 14:1-12.

¹²¹ Ps. 78:38.

¹²² Ps. 78:40-42.

¹²³ Ps. 78:3-7.

trust in him and in Moses his servant.¹²⁴ However real their trust was, it was also fleeting, as new hardships renewed resistance inspired by nostalgia for the way things were before change was initiated.¹²⁵

Coping with Resistance as a Leader

Moses

The transitioning process exacted a heavy emotional toll on Moses.¹²⁶ Spiritually, Moses responded to the people's resistance to implementing change by seeking God in prayer.¹²⁷ Some prayer sessions were quite extensive.¹²⁸ At times, it appears that God initiated the conversation with Moses.¹²⁹

Jeremiah

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, faced moments of discouragement as well. Another look at the structure of Jeremiah yields an inspiring insight. Lundbom delineates Jeremiah 1-20 as an *inclusio* of major importance. Lundbom notes that it was established oratory custom to invert the key words from the opening of a poem in the closing verse.¹³⁰ Jeremiah 1:5 reads, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” According to this analysis, this *inclusio*’s closing verse, Jeremiah 20:18 reads, “Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?” Except for a passing reference in 15:10,

¹²⁴ Ex. 14:31.

¹²⁵ Ex. 16:2-3; 17:1-3; Nu. 11:1, 4-6; 12; 13:31-14:4.

¹²⁶ Nu. 11:10-15.

¹²⁷ Ex. 15:25, 17:4, 19:3; Nu. 11:2, 10-23, 12:13.

¹²⁸ Nu. 14:10-35; Ex. 33:7-34:28.

¹²⁹ Ex. 16:4; Nu. 14:10ff.

¹³⁰ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 42.

these are the only two places Jeremiah refers to his birth. This closing section ends in unanswered despair. Unlike Jeremiah's earlier confessions¹³¹ where the prophet receives an answer from Yahweh, in chapter 20, Von Rad notes, "the God whom the prophet addresses no longer answers him."¹³² Lundbom asserts,

Our *inclusio*, however, makes possible another interpretation, viz., that the conclusion of the poem was perhaps meant to be read together with the opening words of the call. Jeremiah says, "Why did I come forth from the womb?" Answer: "Because Yahweh called me before I came forth from the womb." Whatever despair the original poem of 20:14-18 may have had, in the larger composition *it contains an answer* which is one of hope and affirmation.¹³³

God Motivates Change Using Theology

Noah

God uses a theology of judgment and Noahic Covenant theology in Genesis 9:8-17. God motivates Noah to build an ark to house his family and a remnant of every living creature and every kind of food.¹³⁴

Abram

God motivated Abram to leave his homeland, his people and his extended family for a destination God would later reveal by utilizing the elements of theology of His covenant with Abram.¹³⁵ The promise of God contained seven aspects: (1) "I will make you into a great nation," (2) "I will bless you," (3) "I will make your name great," (4) "You will be a blessing," (5) "I will bless those who

¹³¹ Jer. 11:18-23; 12:1-6; 15:15-21.

¹³² Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology II*, 204, as cited in Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 43.

¹³³ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 43.

¹³⁴ Gen. 6:8-22.

¹³⁵ Genesis 12:1ff., see Acts 7:2.

bless you,” (6) “Whoever curses you I will curse,” (7) “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”¹³⁶

Moses

Moses not only dealt with the persistent resistance of the Israelites to the many changes inherent in the Exodus, but Moses himself was initially resistant to the changes God required. God motivated Moses through theology at the burning bush.¹³⁷ By utilizing theological themes such as the holiness of God,¹³⁸ theology of His covenant,¹³⁹ imminence of God,¹⁴⁰ and God’s name,¹⁴¹ God motivated Moses to come out of isolation to face Pharaoh and lead God’s people out of Egyptian bondage.¹⁴²

Moses and Aaron

God motivated Moses and Aaron to institute The Passover using the theology of atonement that was about to be experienced by them and the people of Israel held captive in Egypt.¹⁴³ Moses was motivated not only to make one more bold appeal to Pharaoh,¹⁴⁴ but also to give precise instructions to the Israelites concerning removing yeast from their diets and their homes, selecting and

¹³⁶ Genesis 12:2-3.

¹³⁷ Ex. 3:4-22; 4:10-17.

¹³⁸ Ex. 3:5.

¹³⁹ Ex. 3:6, 15-17; 4:22.

¹⁴⁰ Ex. 3:12, 20, 4:11-12.

¹⁴¹ Ex. 3:14.

¹⁴² Ex. 3:10.

¹⁴³ Ex. 12:1-20; 13:14-16.

¹⁴⁴ Ex. 11:4-8.

sacrificing the Passover lamb, painting the doorframes of their homes with the blood of the Passover lamb, and remaining inside their homes until morning.¹⁴⁵

Other Examples in the Pentateuch

God motivated obedience to His ways through redemption theology when He issued the Ten Commandments.¹⁴⁶ God expanded on this theology of redemption in motivating the Israelites to “Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, and his laws and his commands always.”¹⁴⁷ God also impressed upon Israel that their children had not seen nor experienced the redemptive miracles God demonstrated in Egypt and in crossing the Red Sea.¹⁴⁸ God used theology to motivate Israel to be diligent in passing on God’s Word and testimony to future generations to maintain a legacy of faithfulness to Yahweh. God goes on to urge Israel and their descendants to resist any pressure to change the focus of their worship to include other gods.¹⁴⁹ God used covenant theology, including elements of providence, blessing and judgment.¹⁵⁰

Elijah

God comforted Elijah and motivated him to anoint successors to carry on God’s will following Elijah’s discouraged refuge from Jezebel.¹⁵¹ God demonstrated His omniscience, omnipotence, and sovereignty by demonstrating

¹⁴⁵ Ex. 12:14-23.

¹⁴⁶ Ex. 20:2.

¹⁴⁷ Dt. 11:1.

¹⁴⁸ Dt. 11:2-7.

¹⁴⁹ Dt. 11:16-21.

¹⁵⁰ Dt. 11:16-32.

¹⁵¹ 1 Kings 19:1-18.

to Elijah spectacular displays of wind, earthquake and fire, reminiscent of God's spectacular display of power on Mount Carmel. While God was Present on Mount Carmel, God was not in the wind, earthquake or fire. Through a gentle whisper, God assured Elijah of God's sovereignty, even in the absence of sensational divine intervention.

Gentile Mission

In the New Testament, God motivated Peter and the early church to change their view of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan. Peter explains the thesis of this rhetorical unit¹⁵² in Acts 10:34-35 when he states, "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."¹⁵³ Peter goes on to testify that this thesis is consistent with the outcome of Jesus' ministry.¹⁵⁴ When the Holy Spirit dramatically demonstrates His endorsement,¹⁵⁵ the Trinity has spoken a unified message. Peter underscores God's compelling point, "who was I to think that I could oppose God?",¹⁵⁶ This silenced the objections of his circumcised audience.¹⁵⁷ God thus motivated the church to expand the mission from Jerusalem to Antioch¹⁵⁸ and initiate the Gentile mission.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Ac. 10:1-11:18.

¹⁵³ Ac. 10:34-35. J. Ian H. McDonald, "Rhetorical Issue and Rhetorical Strategy in Luke 10.25-37 and Acts 10.1-11.18," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 59-73.

¹⁵⁴ Acts 10:43.

¹⁵⁵ Acts 10:44-48.

¹⁵⁶ Ac. 11:17.

¹⁵⁷ Acts 11:3, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Acts 1:1-12:25.

¹⁵⁹ Acts 13:1-28:31.

Jesus Motivates Change Using Theology

This section will be divided into three parts: Authentic Message; Authentic Messenger and Clear Communication. First, believers accept the Bible as God's Word and thus an authentic message. However, Jesus utilized several means to underscore this truth and authenticate the message He brings. Second, Jesus authenticated his own credibility as the messenger. Third, Jesus was careful to communicate the Gospel in clear, even compelling terms.

Authentic Message

In Mark 2:23-28 Jesus argues inductively against the Pharisaic codes of Sabbath observance. Jesus uses Scripture valued by his audience^{160 161} to cite a precedent authority¹⁶² establishing necessity (hunger) as the analogy to rebut the Pharisee's accusation of illegality. By positing "need" over against the "law," Burton Mack suggests that Jesus was able to make the case that "just as David was 'lord' of the temple (though violating it), so Jesus is 'lord' of the Sabbath (though violating it)."¹⁶³ Jesus' point is that God does not condemn David's action and so the Pharisees should rethink their exacting standards of Sabbath observance.¹⁶⁴ Inductive reasoning leaves the major premise to be introduced at

¹⁶⁰ The scribal approach to *halakha* required that rulings be established by an actual precept prescribed directly or indirectly from the Scriptures. William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark, The International Commentary on the New Testament*, gen. ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 117.

¹⁶¹ 1 Sam. 21:1-6.

¹⁶² Mk. 2:25-26.

¹⁶³ Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament, Guides to Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Dan O. Via, Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 53.

¹⁶⁴ Plucking grain with one's hands was permissible under Mosaic Law. Using a sickle was forbidden (Dt. 23:25). The Pharisees objected to the disciples doing so on the Sabbath,

the end, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath",¹⁶⁵ concluding with a final authoritative pronouncement, "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."¹⁶⁶¹⁶⁷

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew lists Jesus' six renowned antitheses ("You have heard...But I say to you"). The last of these antitheses, love your enemies, illustrates a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees¹⁶⁸ who taught to love your neighbor and hate your enemy.¹⁶⁹ Jesus uses deliberative persuasion to commend this superior ethic in Matthew 5:43-48.¹⁷⁰ Using a theology of nature, with two analogies highlighting the sun and rain, Jesus appeals to his audience to participate in the divine order by embracing a superior ethos.

Authentic Messenger

Essentially every time Jesus steps into the public eye, He is faced with a challenge, whether the pressing challenge of the demon-possessed men in Matthew 8, the accusations of the Pharisees in Matthew 12, who chided that Jesus' power came from Beelzebub, or the confrontations with the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem in Matthew 12-23. Jesus' reputation as a prophet,

interpreting their plucking grain in the strictest sense as reaping, forbidden by Moses (Ex. 34:21). Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 114-115.

¹⁶⁵ Mk. 2:27.

¹⁶⁶ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 52.

¹⁶⁷ Mk. 2:28.

¹⁶⁸ Mt. 5:20.

¹⁶⁹ Lev. 19:18.

¹⁷⁰ Deliberative rhetoric appeals to the common good, treats specific topics, and uses examples as proofs. Margaret Mary Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 39-42, 60-64.

teacher and healer was challenged so persistently that this phenomenon serves to underscore how recognizable Jesus' worthiness of honor actually was.¹⁷¹ Jesus enhanced his honor and furthered his reputation in every one of these challenge-riposte incidents.

Jesus is a flawless model of his own standards.¹⁷² As Jesus initiates his public ministry, he submits to baptism by John so as "to fulfill all righteousness."¹⁷³ The temptation narrative shows Jesus overcoming the wiles of the devil through the power of the Word of God.¹⁷⁴ In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus characteristically prays that God's will be done.¹⁷⁵ Jesus teaches righteousness and doing the will of God as essential for entering the kingdom of heaven.¹⁷⁶ Jesus defines true discipleship in familial terms as those who do "the will of my Father in heaven."¹⁷⁷

Jesus' invitation becomes even more personal, marked by humility as the one who has come to serve,¹⁷⁸ as Jesus invites his followers to learn of him in humility of heart.¹⁷⁹ Jesus taught humble service¹⁸⁰ and called his disciples to

¹⁷¹ Winning honor and shaming one's enemies was valued by Matthew's audience according to Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1998), 5, as cited in Dan Wilson, *The Rhetorical Point of View on Matthew's Structure and Situation* [Microform] (Portland, OR: Theological Research Exchange Network, 2002), 13.

¹⁷² David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990), 251-252.

¹⁷³ Matt. 3:15.

¹⁷⁴ Matt. 4:1ff.

¹⁷⁵ Matt. 26:39, 42.

¹⁷⁶ Matt. 5:20; 7:21.

¹⁷⁷ Matt. 12:50.

¹⁷⁸ Matt. 20:28.

¹⁷⁹ Matt. 11:28-30.

¹⁸⁰ Matt. 23:10ff.

pursue a “greater righteousness”,¹⁸¹ which includes loving God and being perfect as one’s heavenly Father is perfect,¹⁸² as well as loving others,¹⁸³ even loving the most undesirable.¹⁸⁴ Jesus models these truths by welcoming children¹⁸⁵ and sharing table fellowship with outcasts and sinners.¹⁸⁶ Jesus’ healing ministry was motivated by compassion for the people,¹⁸⁷ demonstrating Jesus’ personal faithfulness to his beatitude on being merciful.

Children figure prominently in Jesus’ instructions on discipleship. Jesus shocks cultural and religious sensibilities by illustrating for his disciples true greatness in God’s Kingdom by calling a little child.^{188 189} Earlier,¹⁹⁰ Jesus praised the Father for obscuring Kingdom realities from the wise and learned in favor of revealing them to little children. Later, in the Jerusalem temple, it is the children who heralded him the Son of David, as Psalm 8 foretold.¹⁹¹

Jesus insists those who aspire for heaven must make this radical change to become like little children.¹⁹² Humility¹⁹³ is not abasement for its own sake, but,

¹⁸¹ Matt. 5:20.

¹⁸² Matt. 5:48.

¹⁸³ Matt. 22:37-40; cf. 7:12.

¹⁸⁴ Matt. 5:43ff.

¹⁸⁵ Matt. 19:13ff.

¹⁸⁶ Matt. 8:10ff.; 26:6ff.

¹⁸⁷ Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; cf. 20:34.

¹⁸⁸ “In view of the fact that a child was not seen in the early Jewish or Graeco-Roman world as a religious model for adults, this teaching is striking. To the contrary, if one reads Proverbs or some Graeco-Roman literature, the child is seen as willful, subject to various possible bad influences, and requiring instruction and regular discipline.” Ben Witherington III, *Matthew*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary, R. Scott Nash, Editor (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2006), 344.

¹⁸⁹ Matt. 18:2.

¹⁹⁰ Matt. 11:25.

¹⁹¹ Matt. 21:16.

¹⁹² Matt. 18:3.

¹⁹³ Matt. 18:4.

consistent with the first Beatitude,¹⁹⁴ to empty oneself to a total, child-like dependence upon God.¹⁹⁵ This is consistent with Jesus' earlier portrayal of God as the Good Father who gives good gifts to his children¹⁹⁶ who depend upon Him. This characteristic of childlike dependence upon God positions one to serve anyone of any status unencumbered by self-serving concerns for greatness, position or recognition.¹⁹⁷

The implications of this lesson appear to have been lost on Jesus' disciples when they express the typical attitude of the time that minimized the worth of children as they were brought to see Jesus.¹⁹⁸ Jesus again reasserts the childlike attitude of dependence, receiving the Kingdom of God as pure underserved gift as essential for those desiring to enter.¹⁹⁹

Jesus taught his disciples to let their good deeds glorify God²⁰⁰ rather than engage in public displays of piety like the Pharisees.²⁰¹ Jesus' deeds bore witness to others.²⁰² Jesus modeled prayer in private²⁰³ and taught²⁰⁴ and modeled for his disciples a viable dependence on the Father in prayer.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁴ Matt. 5:3.

¹⁹⁵ Walter Grundmann, “ταπεινωω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 16-17.

¹⁹⁶ Matt. 7:11.

¹⁹⁷ Witherington, *Matthew*, 345.

¹⁹⁸ Matt. 19:13.

¹⁹⁹ Witherington, *Matthew*. 367.

²⁰⁰ Matt. 5:13ff.; 23:5ff.

²⁰¹ Matt. 6:1ff.; 23:5ff.

²⁰² Matt. 15:31.

²⁰³ Matt. 14:23.

²⁰⁴ Matt. 6:9ff.

²⁰⁵ Matt. 26:36ff.

The opening declaration in Mark's Gospel²⁰⁶ that Jesus is the Messiah is "immediately" followed by Jesus' temptation by Satan. Likewise, when Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah,²⁰⁷ Satan's resistance is unleashed again, this time through Peter.²⁰⁸ Jesus' journey to the cross has implications for all who would follow in His steps.²⁰⁹ Jesus rebukes Peter and subsequently links discipleship accompanied by a cross for all who follow Jesus. This calls for a calculated decision of total commitment.²¹⁰ Jesus uses the intensified term, *απαρνεομαι*, to convey the utter selfless surrender necessary for true discipleship. Jesus leads by example in his personal journey to Calvary. Jesus also demonstrates selfless living when he washed the feet of 12 proud disciples.²¹¹ The irony of Messiah Jesus, on the eve of his crucifixion, humbly serving his followers who would soon desert him, including his betrayer, effectively conveys Godly character. Jesus models his invitation to "take up your cross" in such graphic ways that compels disciples even centuries later.²¹² Jesus models his teaching on being a peace-maker²¹³ and not resisting evil²¹⁴ when he chose a non-violent response to his arrest and persecution.²¹⁵

In his seven letters Jesus gives divine assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of seven churches in Revelation 2:1-3:22. The introductory

²⁰⁶ Mk. 1:11.

²⁰⁷ Mk. 8:29.

²⁰⁸ Mk. 8:32-33. M. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 205, as cited in Witherington, *Matthew*, 318.

²⁰⁹ 1 Peter 2:21.

²¹⁰ Mark 8:33-38 and parallels.

²¹¹ John 13.

²¹² Mark 8:34 and parallels.

²¹³ Matt. 5:9.

²¹⁴ Matt. 5:38ff.

²¹⁵ Matt. 26:52ff.

characterization of Christ in each letter provides theological credibility and relevance tailored to each church addressed. This characterization of Christ reiterates Christ's authority and it's bearing on the situation in that particular church.

Jesus lists the good qualities of each church, with the exception of Laodicea, where nothing is named as praiseworthy. Jesus "highlights different aspects of His Holy character as He communicates hope, admonition and praise" to the seven churches in Revelation.²¹⁶ Ladd notes, "Each letter is introduced by a brief characterization of Christ as he has been portrayed in the first chapter. Usually this characterization is adapted to the situation in the local church."²¹⁷

Clear Communication

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that theology that does not effect appropriate change in one's life is unacceptable. In one parable, the two builders who each hear Jesus' teaching and face the same storm, differ in one crucial respect that determines their end as either destruction or perseverance.²¹⁸ The one who failed to put Jesus' teaching into practice discovered the truth James later taught that faith without works is dead.²¹⁹ "The essence of discipleship is not

²¹⁶ Kenneth L. Carozza, *Biblical Persuasion: An Introduction to "Character-based Preaching Methods* (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1997), 10.

²¹⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 36, as cited in Carozza, *Biblical Persuasion*, 10-11.

²¹⁸ Matt. 7:24-27.

²¹⁹ James 2:17.

just about belief, but also about behavior or ethics; indeed the latter is the ultimate revealer of what one truly believes.”²²⁰

Jesus uses the theology of nature and God’s sovereign care to motivate listeners to shun worry in Luke 12:22-31. Jesus opens with the imperative, “Do not worry”.²²¹ Imperatives attribute a strong authority to the speaker (*ethos*), and reveal “a heightened concern that the audience accepts the recommended wisdom as rule (*pathos*).”²²²

The value of human life,²²³ according to Mack’s analysis, is the major premise of this rhetorical syllogism. The minor premise is that God will provide.²²⁴ “The conclusion²²⁵ reiterates the thesis as proven.”²²⁶ Arguments are framed from the lesser to the greater (people are more than birds or flowers), as well as the greater to the lesser (God’s kingdom is more than all of life). The thrust of Jesus’ instruction is to center life’s frame-of-reference on God’s realm and God’s righteousness rather than the demands of this life.²²⁷ Trust God thoroughly.

Jesus used parables to communicate theological truth in order to motivate people to change.²²⁸ In Luke 10:25-37 there is a parabolic unit²²⁹ set within the

²²⁰ Witherington, *Matthew*, 163.

²²¹ Lk. 12:22.

²²² Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 51.

²²³ Lk. 12:23.

²²⁴ Lk. 12: 24, 28, 30.

²²⁵ Lk. 12:31.

²²⁶ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 51.

²²⁷ Lk. 12:31.

²²⁸ “What does this mean except that he brought theology down into daily life and into the immediate everyday situation?” Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric*, 86.

²²⁹ Lk. 10:30-35.

larger rhetorical unit.²³⁰ Jesus' parable interacts with the rhetorical unit, which opens with the lawyer's question concerning what is required of an individual to inherit eternal life.²³¹ Jesus answers with a counter-question, drawing from the lawyer his understanding of Torah. The lawyer answers with a recitation of the *Shema*, Deut. 6:5, and Lev. 19:18. Not content with Jesus' affirmation,²³² the lawyer pressed, "And who is my neighbor?"²³³ Jesus answers with the parable of the neighborly Samaritan, leaving the lawyer to ponder, however reluctantly, "what would have been unthinkable to him at the outset."^{234 235} Jesus demonstrates his mastery of rhetorical practice in this parable of the Good Samaritan by convicting this lawyer's soul. As Plato summarized, "The [rhetorician's] whole effort is directed towards the soul; for in that he seeks to produce conviction."²³⁶

More instructive, perhaps is the larger context where Jesus' parable on loving one's neighbor is followed by his visit to the home of Mary and Martha.²³⁷ Together, the parable and the outcome of Jesus' visit illustrate the two aspects of

²³⁰ McDonald, "Rhetorical Issue and Rhetorical Strategy," 61.

²³¹ Lk. 10:25.

²³² Lk. 10:28.

²³³ Lk. 10:29.

²³⁴ McDonald, "Rhetorical Issue and Rhetorical Strategy," 66.

²³⁵ Samaritans and foreigners were excluded from the Jewish understanding of the Levitical obligation of love. J. Fichtner and H. Greeven, TDNT VI, 311-318, as cited in I. Harold Marshall, Commentary on Luke, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 444.

²³⁶ Plato, as cited in Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel*, Edited by R. Alan Culpepper, Rolf Rendtorff and David E. Orton, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 65 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), 36. Jesus in His Trinity is one with the Holy Spirit and so this may be an appropriate application. However, see the following discussion (Heralds and the Holy Spirit) on 1 Cor. 1-2 on the work of the orator in deference to the work of the Holy Spirit.

²³⁷ Lk. 10:38-42.

these two greatest commandments. Put in chiastic form: “You shall love the Lord your God:

- a with all your heart, soul, mind and strength
- b and your neighbor as yourself.”
- b' *parable on love of neighbor (good Samaritan)*
- a' *narrative on complete devotion (Mary/Martha)*²³⁸

Wilson notes, “Both incidents involve the problem of seeing and not seeing, hearing and not hearing.”²³⁹ Jesus leaves his listeners with a positive vision of the Good Samaritan and Mary as those discerning the heart of God expressed in the *Shema*. Likewise, Jesus provides a priest, Levite and Martha with a ponderous revelation that even respectable, committed religious folk can overlook what matters most.

Jesus tells a parable in Luke 12:16-21 concerning the man who housed his windfall in bigger barns. Here, Jesus “contrasts contentedness and wealth with the demands to use riches wisely.”²⁴⁰ In this way Jesus challenges a prevailing trust in amassing assets by introducing larger life issues and one’s relationship with God. The use of one’s assets has eternal implications. Jesus uses the parable to motivate contented people to see their need to change before it is too late.

Deliberative discourse answers the question what shall we do? Jesus presents a deliberative argument in Mark 10:17-31 about sacrificing everything to

²³⁸ Victor M. Wilson, *Divine Symmetries: The Art of Biblical Rhetoric* (Lanhan, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1997), 213.

²³⁹ Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 213.

²⁴⁰ L Gregory Bloomquist, “The Role of the Audience in the Determination of Argumentation: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, Eds. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Ubelacker (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002).

inherit eternal life. Jesus uses four arguments in support of his thesis. First, the proverb about the first and the last is presented as the concluding maxim. Second, Jesus contrasts limited human potential with the theological assertion that all things are possible with God. Jesus' third argument examines human potential, contrasting the example of the man who did not and the disciples who did leave all to follow Jesus. Jesus' fourth argument is the analogy of the camel passing through a needle's eye. Mack says this is

The only argument taken from the realm of common sense, and is used to mediate the opposition between possible and impossible by substituting the categories of 'easy' and difficult' (also taken from the traditional list of final topics). The sense of the whole is that, though it is difficult to follow Jesus, it is possible and, in light of the heavenly rewards, worth it.²⁴¹

This writer disagrees with Mack. The camel analogy does not imply following Jesus is difficult but possible for the wealthy or those with profound attachment to things of this world. Jesus' use of hyperbole makes the opposite point, which the disciples seize when they respond, "Who then can be saved?"²⁴² Jesus' is emphatic, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."²⁴³ Jesus goes on to assert a thorough submission to God, who can do all things, and is worthy of any earthly sacrifice.²⁴⁴

In Acts 1:6-11 the disciples ask if Jesus will now restore the Kingdom. Without answering as the disciples had hoped, Jesus motivates his disciples by expanding their limited theology of the Kingdom of God by showing them their

²⁴¹ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 55.

²⁴² Mk. 10:26b.

²⁴³ Mk. 10:27.

²⁴⁴ Mk. 10:29-30.

part in expanding its reach from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.²⁴⁵ In actual practice, the vision was not willingly followed through. Not until persecution scattered Christ's followers to wider reaches did the vision begin to materialize more fully. This illustrates the need for reinforcing the vision or introducing reasons to re-embrace the larger vision, lest people content themselves with the changes to date. This unfolding testimony throughout the book of Acts shows that God is sovereign to accomplish His will despite the weaknesses of His human instruments.

People Motivate Change Using Theology

The Word of the Lord

People imitate God's use of theology to motivate others. Some simply repeat God's word in order to instruct others in faithfulness, righteousness, or to otherwise motivate them to obey and worship God. God instructed Moses to speak to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says."²⁴⁶ Moses and Aaron used theology to motivate the people to worship God and trust God to deliver them from their slavery.²⁴⁷ Even Balaam, the reluctant prophet, was compelled to convey what the Lord said.²⁴⁸ The unnamed man of God²⁴⁹ and Samuel reported the word of God to Eli.²⁵⁰ The prophet Nathan spoke God's word to David²⁵¹ as does the prophet Gad²⁵² and others throughout the pages of Scripture.²⁵³

²⁴⁵ Acts 1:8.

²⁴⁶ Ex. 4:22; 7:17; 8:1, 20; 11:4, .

²⁴⁷ Ex. 4:29-31.

²⁴⁸ God instructed Moses to speak to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says:" in Ex. 4:22; 7:17; 8:1, 20; 11:4. Nu. 23:26; 24:13.

²⁴⁹ 1 Sam. 2:27ff.

²⁵⁰ 1 Sam.3:18.

Heralds and the Holy Spirit

Persuasion involves several steps for the audience: (1) attend to the message, (2) comprehend the message, (3) yield to the message, (4) retain the message, and (5) act on the message.²⁵⁴ Greco-Roman rhetoric focused on engendering *πιστις* (faith) in one's listeners. Paul's purpose is very different. Rather than persuade, Paul saw his task as the caretaker of God's message, which he was privileged to announce. As a herald, the preacher focuses on capturing people's attention and enhancing their comprehension.²⁵⁵ The Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing people to faith, that is, their yielding to the message, retaining and acting upon the message in faith.²⁵⁶ An unacceptable line is crossed when a herald presumes to take on the work of the Holy Spirit by leveraging influence on the latter areas that are in God's domain. While human wisdom and rhetorical skill can achieve some response from an audience, it is a response the Apostle Paul found offensive in that it discredited the power of Christ and His cross.²⁵⁷ Even Socrates suggested that "if only divine revelation were available,

²⁵¹ 2 Sam 7:5ff.; 12:11.

²⁵² 2 Sam. 24:12 ff.

²⁵³ 1 Ki. 12:22ff.; 13:1ff.; 20:13ff.; 21:19ff.; 22:11ff.; 2 Ki. 1:4ff.; 2:21ff.; 3:16ff.; 4:43ff.; 7:1ff.; 9:3ff.; 19:6ff.; 20:1ff.; 22:16ff.; 1 Ch. 17:4ff.; 21:10ff.; 2 Ch. 11:4; 12:5ff.; 18:10ff.; 20:15ff.; 34:24ff.; Ps. 68:22; 110:1ff.; Is. 3:16ff.; 16:14; 18:4ff.; 21:6ff.; 29:13ff.; 31:4ff.; 37:6ff.; 38:1ff.; 42:5ff.; 43:1ff.; 44:2ff.; 45:1ff.; 48:17ff.; 49:5ff.; 50:1ff.; 52:3ff.; 56:1ff.; 65:8ff.; 66:1ff.; Jer. 2:5ff.; 4:3ff.; 6:16ff.; 8:4ff.; 9:23ff.; 10:1ff.; 11:11ff.; 12:14ff.; 13:9ff.; 14:10ff.; 15:2 ff.; 16:3 ff.; 17:5ff.; 18:11 ff.; 19:1 ff.; 20:4 ff.; 21:8 ff.; 22:1 ff.; 23:17 ff.; 26:2 ff.; 27:16 ff.; 28:11 ff.; 29:10 ff.; 30:5 ff.; 31:2 ff.; 32:3 ff.; 33:2 ff.; 34:2 ff.; 36:29 ff.; 37:9 ff.; 38:2 ff.; 42:4 ff.; 44:30; 45:4 ff.; 47:2 ff.; 48:40 ff.; 49:1 ff.; 51:1 ff.; Ez. 11:5 ff.; 21:3 ff.; 30:6 ff.; Am. 1:3 ff.; 2:1 ff.; 3:12 ff.; 5:4 ff.; 7:17; Mic. 2:3 ff.; 3:5 ff.; 6:1 ff.; Na. 112 ff.; Zech. 1:16 ff.; 8:3 ff.; Mal. 1:2 ff.

²⁵⁴ Richard E. Petty and Duane T. Wegener, "Attitude Change: Multiple Roles for Persuasion Variables" *Handbook on Social Psychology*, 4th ed., eds. Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske, and Gardner Lindzey (Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1998), 342-366.

²⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1-5.

²⁵⁶ Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*, 247.

²⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 1:17.

human wisdom might be dispensed with.”²⁵⁸ Paul, like any preacher, is wise to recognize his audience is a given. One must strive to understand one’s audience, and accept them where they are.

Paul’s First Letter to Corinth

Corinth, like too many churches today, suffered a serious lapse between their belief and their behavior.²⁵⁹ Paul wrote his first epistle to remind them of the implications of salvation in Christ and the cross for church unity,²⁶⁰ church discipline,²⁶¹ litigation,²⁶² purity²⁶³ and the appropriate observance of the Lord’s Supper.²⁶⁴

Some in Corinth criticized Paul because his preaching fell short of the standards of Greco-Roman rhetoric, a form deeply embedded in that culture.²⁶⁵ Writing on 1 Corinthians 1-4, Duane Litfin notes, “We must be willing to avail ourselves of a relatively sophisticated understanding of the genius of classical rhetoric if we are to do justice to Paul’s argument.”²⁶⁶

Paul wrote 1 Cor. 1:17-2:5 “at a time when it was not possible to be considered wise without being eloquent.”²⁶⁷ The Corinthians lived in a culture

²⁵⁸ Phaedo 85D; 99C; Phaedrus 274C, as cited in Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, 255.

²⁵⁹ Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, 182.

²⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 1:10-17.

²⁶¹ 1 Cor. 5:1-13.

²⁶² 1 Cor. 6:1-11.

²⁶³ 1 Cor. 6:12-20.

²⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 11:17-34.

²⁶⁵ Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation*, 3.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 17.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 244.

that highly valued rhetorical eloquence. At the heart of rhetoric “lay the power of language and ideas to sway men’s minds, and Paul knew it.”²⁶⁸

When Paul says he has “become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” he speaks from the vantage point of a herald seeking to capture attention and speak in terms the audience can comprehend.²⁶⁹ Paul elaborates upon the adaptations he makes personally so his audience will pay attention to the Gospel or comprehend its message without impediment. However, Paul’s focus is not on people’s response, but on the clarity and accuracy in which he preaches Christ.²⁷⁰

Πειθω In the Book of Acts

This assertion appears to be challenged in Acts 28 where we read of Paul, “From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.”²⁷¹ The challenge emerges with the appearance of the word πειθω, meaning to convince, or trying to convince them about Jesus.²⁷² Witherington says the use of the term πειθω in verses 23 and 24 implies that “Paul used various forms of persuasion, that is, rhetoric, to try to convince his audience.”²⁷³ The above argument is challenged further with the use of the imperfect passive form

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 245.

²⁶⁹ 1 Cor 9:22.

²⁷⁰ 1 Cor. 1:22-24. Paul takes seriously the sacred trust to faithfully convey the Gospel, 1 Cor. 4:1-2.

²⁷¹ Acts 28:23.

²⁷² Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 639.

²⁷³ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 801.

of $\pi\varepsilon\iota\theta\omega$ in verse 24, meaning some “were persuaded.” There is no mention of baptism or repentance of these persuaded Jews, which could suggest such persuasion was simply human rather than of the Holy Spirit.

However, consistent with the earlier argument is Luke’s word choices describing Paul’s Gospel proclamation: $\delta\iota\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\nu\mu\omega\alpha\iota$ means to testify, or bear witness to God’s kingdom,²⁷⁴ and $\varepsilon\kappa\tau\iota\theta\eta\mu\iota$ means to explain.²⁷⁵ This writer understands this passage to show Paul’s zeal to appeal to his audience as clearly as he is able using “the Law of Moses and the Prophets” rather than his rhetorical prowess or relying on human wisdom or tactics. Paul’s tireless proclamation from “morning till evening” underscores his commitment to Christ and passion for the lost. The citation of Isaiah’s ominous prophecy of resistance to the Gospel message testifies to Paul’s submission to the Holy Spirit who chose to not change the hearts of many Jews. Despite Paul’s passion for his own people,²⁷⁶ he followed the Spirit’s lead to freely proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The use of the term $\pi\varepsilon\iota\theta\omega$ elsewhere in the book of Acts supports this argument of Paul’s proclamation rather than human rhetoric. We read of Paul in Acts 18:4, “Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.” The term “reasoned” is $\delta\iota\alpha\lambda\epsilon\gamma\mu\omega\alpha\iota$, meaning to speak or preach.²⁷⁷ The word $\pi\varepsilon\iota\theta\omega$ is used in the same sense in Acts 28:23, meaning to convince,²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 186.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 245.

²⁷⁶ Romans 9:1-6; 10:1

²⁷⁷ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 185.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 639.

rather than persuade.²⁷⁹ Likewise in Acts 19:8, “Paul spoke boldly ...arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God.” The word πειθω might better read “convincingly,” rather than “persuasively,” in order to not confuse readers on this issue. Likewise, Paul simply explains, διανοιγω, and proclaims Jesus, καταγγελλω, in Acts 17:3-4 and some “were persuaded.” In this usage, πειθω means “believed.”²⁸⁰

The term πειθω carries a different sense in Acts 13:43 when Paul & Barnabas “talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.”²⁸¹ Here, πειθω does mean persuade or appeal to. However, the verse reveals their conversation was within the realm of proclamation without transgressing the Holy Spirit’s domain. However, Festus uses πειθω in this sense when he chides Paul, “You are in a hurry to persuade me and make a Christian of me.”²⁸² This last case is an accusation of one resistant to the Holy Spirit’s conviction rather than a legitimate assessment of Paul’s actual practice.

The message of the Gospel is an invitation to be reconciled to God, as though God were literally making His appeal through the preacher.²⁸³ So even when Paul calls for his audience to take action, “Be reconciled to God”,²⁸⁴ he is simply, albeit passionately, communicating the heart of the Gospel message rather than applying the art of persuasion that depends on human skill. The preacher’s

²⁷⁹ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich do not agree with Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 348.

²⁸⁰ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 639

²⁸¹ Acts 13:43.

²⁸² Acts 26:28, Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 639

²⁸³ 2 Cor. 5:20.

²⁸⁴ 2 Cor. 5:20.

task is to present divine revelation clearly, with authority, relying upon the work of the Holy Spirit who alone can affect the desired outcome in individuals' lives and in the church.

One must maintain perspective here, since Paul's communication was often intentional, which fits the broader definition of rhetorical.²⁸⁵ One could go on to say essentially all human communication is rhetorical, since communication typically seeks to influence. However, there is a qualitative distinction between intentionality and the persuasive argumentation of Greco-Roman oratory.

For Repentance

Biblical characters use theology to motivate change in others for various reasons. Following are some examples of people motivating change using theology with the hope that the Spirit of God will lead them to repentance.

Nathan's Parable

Nathan enabled errant King David to face and repent of his sin by using a juridical parable.^{286 287} The audience, David, expects a sheep to be taken from the rich man's flock. When the poor man's only ewe lamb is unexpectedly taken, David's shock and outrage at this injustice motivates him to take action. Nathan

²⁸⁵ Maurice Natanson, "The Limits of Rhetoric," in *The Province of Rhetoric*, eds. J. Schwarz and J. A. Rycenga (New York: The Ronald Press, 1965), 65, as cited in Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*, 255.

²⁸⁶ P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary, *The Anchor Bible*, Vol. 9, gen. eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1984), 304.

²⁸⁷ 2 Sam. 12:1-10.

then links the rich oppressor in the parable with David, who has unwittingly pronounced his own judgment.²⁸⁸

Jeremiah

Jeremiah issues a harsh word of judgment to powerful rulers in Judah in Jeremiah 22:20-23. This is the third of three “Lebanon” poems in the “King Collection.”²⁸⁹ ²⁹⁰ Jerusalem’s royal palaces were so plush Jeremiah refers to them metaphorically as “Lebanon.” Kings are referred to as “shepherds.” Jeremiah’s lavish use of metaphor and irony distance him from his audience. This is probably deliberate since Jeremiah is announcing defeat for the king and his court due to their idolatry. Idolatry is often portrayed as prostitution, so “lovers” is the right translation of the Piel participle form of בְּנָא in verses 20 and 22.²⁹¹

In Jeremiah 3:1-5 the *inclusio* is formed by two different forms of the interjection, which each can be translated, “behold.” However, many translate יְהִי as “if,”²⁹² and by modifying the vowel points with הַנָּה eliminate the “behold” in verse five. Lundbom translates Jeremiah 3:1, “*Behold*, a man divorces his wife and she goes from him...” and 3:5, “...*Behold*, you have spoken but done all the evil that you could.”²⁹³

²⁸⁸ McCarter, II Samuel, 305.

²⁸⁹ The other Lebanon poems are 22:13-17 and 22:20-23. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 66.

²⁹⁰ Jer. 21:1-23:8.

²⁹¹ This is the translation used in the ESV. The NIV uses the term “allies” based on the participle form translated “friend” as in 2 Chron. 20:7. Jeremiah’s irony in this poem decries Judah’s idolatry, often portrayed as prostitution, thus the term “lovers” fits here. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 14.

²⁹² Some translations doing so include NIV, ESV, RSV, JB, NEB.

²⁹³ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 53-54.

In this poem Jeremiah makes a case for judgment by citing the law that forbids a man from remarrying his ex-wife after she has contracted another marriage.²⁹⁴ “The man cannot return to his former wife because she has known (or been known) by *one* other man; in Jeremiah’s argument Israel has had *many* lovers.”²⁹⁵ Jeremiah’s audience knew the answer to the Lord’s question, “would you now return to me?” is clearly “No” based on Judah’s rampant idolatry. Rather than inviting them to come and be forgiven, this question launches further indictments in the verses that follow, including Judah’s lack of remorse.²⁹⁶ Jeremiah’s astute use of rhetorical questions forces his audience to acknowledge one’s indictment and personally face the impossibility of one’s redemption. Lundbom notes that while this approach is profoundly effective, with the onus of pronouncing judgment on the recipient’s conclusions more than the prophet’s proclamation, this approach is limited in its effect. He notes, “This kind of rhetoric will not be grasped by everyone. Only those who are perceptive will pick up the judgment Jeremiah intends. Others must wait for someone to explain it to them.”²⁹⁷

Jeremiah uses subtlety in Jeremiah 5:10-13, speaking in metaphorical generalities so that his audience can follow his argument without immediately being offended by a direct accusation. The “branches”²⁹⁸ are identified in verse 13

²⁹⁴ Deut. 24:1-4.

²⁹⁵ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 54.

²⁹⁶ Jer. 3:3.

²⁹⁷ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 56.

²⁹⁸ Jer. 5:10.

as the prophets, leaving it to the listener to conclude fitting divine justice for them.²⁹⁹

Jeremiah 29 is addressed to Jewish exiles to motivate them to accept this period of exile in Babylon and trust in the Lord.³⁰⁰ Jeremiah presents the exile as part of God's judgment, urging faithfulness to Yahweh and offering a future hope of returning to God's favor. This is in contrast to those prophets in Babylon living immorally and foretelling an imminent return to Jerusalem.³⁰¹ The overall chiastic structure is as follows:

- A Welfare of Babylon (4-9)
- B Welfare of Jerusalem (10-14)
- B' Judgment in Jerusalem (16-20)
- A' Judgment in Babylon (15, 21-23)³⁰²

Abijah

Abijah's message on Mount Zemaraim utilizes Davidic Covenant theology³⁰³ and the theology of Yahweh worship³⁰⁴ to motivate Jeroboam to relinquish his rebellious reign, and Israel to return to proper Yahweh worship. Jeroboam instead attacks Judah with an army twice the size of Judah's force,³⁰⁵ yet Judah routs Israel and Jeroboam dies.

²⁹⁹ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 56.

³⁰⁰ Jer. 29:10-14.

³⁰¹ Jer. 29:15, 21-23.

³⁰² Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 137.

³⁰³ 2 Chron. 13:5.

³⁰⁴ 2 Chron. 13:9-12.

³⁰⁵ 2 Chron. 13:3, 13-18.

Azariah

Azariah's prophecy uses theology of God's faithfulness to motivate Asa to seek the Lord and to persevere in what is right.³⁰⁶ Asa, encouraged by Azariah's words, removes the idols from all of Judah and repairs the altar of the Lord.³⁰⁷ All Judah and Benjamin assemble in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to Yahweh and covenant to seek the Lord whole-heartedly.³⁰⁸

Hulda

King Josiah was motivated by a fear of the Lord to follow God and obey the Book of the Law.³⁰⁹ When the prophetess Hulda shared the theology of God's pending judgment,³¹⁰ and mercy to the humble with a heart responsive to God,³¹¹ Josiah calls together everyone in Judah and Jerusalem to hear the book of the covenant read.³¹² The theology inherent in the reading of God's Word prompted King Josiah and the people to pledge themselves to keep God's Word whole-heartedly.³¹³ They then purge the land of idols and high places.³¹⁴ This incident illustrates motivating change with theology can be an authentic consequence of a leader whose heart is sensitive to the Word of God and to the condition of his life

³⁰⁶ 2 Chron. 15:7.

³⁰⁷ 2 Chron. 15:8, 16.

³⁰⁸ 2 Chron. 15:9-15.

³⁰⁹ 2 Ki. 22:10-20.

³¹⁰ 2 Ki. 22:16-17.

³¹¹ 2 Ki. 22:18-20.

³¹² 2 Ki. 23:1-2.

³¹³ 2 Ki. 23:3.

³¹⁴ 2 Ki. 23:4-20, 24.

and the life of the community he serves. The leader modeled the desired change³¹⁵ and the people's follow-through was significant.³¹⁶

Amos

Wilson presents the book of Amos as a Chiasm:³¹⁷

<i>Superscription</i>	1:1-2
A Judgment upon Israel and 7 nations	1:3-
2:16	
B Israel's coming destruction	3:1-15
C Prediction of exile : condemnation of wealthy women	4:1-13
D Call to repentance	5:1-17
C' Prediction of exile : condemnation of wealthy men	5:18-
6:14	
B' Israel's coming destruction : four visions	7:1-8:3
A' Judgment , and Israel's future among the nations	8:4-
9:15	

This chiastic structure illustrates at the core of Amos' message is the call for God's people to repent.³¹⁸ These seventeen verses in Amos 5 actually form a chiasm within the larger chiastic structure.³¹⁹ The central hub of this chiasm is the

³¹⁵ 2 Ki. 23:3, 25.

³¹⁶ 2 Ki. 23:3-24.

³¹⁷ Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 162.

³¹⁸ D: Amos 5:1-17.

³¹⁹ Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 169.

Name of the Lord³²⁰ nestled within a doxology³²¹ that extols God's power both to create as well as to destroy.

Amos uses graphic imagery to arrest the attention of his audience and persuade them in memorable ways to heed God's word. The roar of the lion³²² is associated with God speaking through his prophet. Be afraid and pay careful attention. Part of God's coming judgment includes a famine of hearing God's Word,³²³ the empty ache of silence in response to passionate pleas to the Almighty.

For Knowing God

Knowing God and God's character is basic to faithful obedience and life. The following examples may include additional purposes. Due to the limited space and scope of this project, these general categories have been discerned to provide order and enhance understanding.

Leviticus

The theology of God's holiness is inherent in the teaching of the book of Leviticus. Physical perfection is the outward sign of spiritual holiness, whether a spotless sacrificial animal,³²⁴ or skin blemishes³²⁵ or bodily discharges.³²⁶ Leviticus instructs believers in appropriate ways to live and ways to approach

³²⁰ Amos 5:8.

³²¹ Amos 5:8-9.

³²² Amos 3:4, 8.

³²³ Amos 8:11.

³²⁴ Lev. 1-7.

³²⁵ Lev. 13-14.

³²⁶ Lev. 12, 15.

God who is holy. Leviticus 1-10 tells how offerings are necessary for sinful people to approach a holy God in worship.³²⁷ The example of the blasphemer who was stoned to death serves to motivate people to honor a holy God with just living, respect for God's name, and due punishment for offenders.³²⁸

For Salvation

Pentecost

In Acts 2 Peter preached the theology of God's redemptive plan, culminating in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, resulting in 3000 "who welcomed his message [and] were baptized."³²⁹ These new converts stepped into a new way of life in fellowship with other believers as, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."³³⁰

For Appropriate Worship

In Lystra

In Acts 14:8-18, Paul and Barnabas motivate the Lystrans to not worship them in response to the miraculous healing performed through them.³³¹ To acclaim a mortal as divine is idolatrous to Jewish and Christian adherents. Paul and Barnabas are careful to correct the Lystrans without offending them.³³² Signs and wonders performed in the name of Jesus elicited enthusiastic responses from crowds of people, some spontaneously turning from past sins, others professing

³²⁷ J. Robert Clinton, *The Bible and Leadership Values*, 63.

³²⁸ Lev. 24:10-23.

³²⁹ Acts 2:41 NRSV.

³³⁰ Acts 2:42 NRSV.

³³¹ Bloomquist, "The Role of the Audience in the Determination of Argumentation," 169.

³³² Ibid, 170.

faith in Christ or praising God.³³³ These signs and wonders were performed as an act of faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit moved in these messengers. When Simon, a baptized believer³³⁴ offered money to gain this miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, he was condemned.^{335 336 337}

The Tabernacle

A theology of worship in Ex. 25-40 begins with the worthiness of God, suggested by the lavish devotion of time, effort and materials to construct the Tabernacle. Almighty God, who is holy and transcendent, not only delivers God's people in supernatural ways, but dwells, or "tabernacles" among them. The nearness of God inspires believers to keep God's instructions as they live for Him and maintain appropriate worship.

The Psalms

The Psalmist uses theology to motivate "all the earth" to praise and worship God.³³⁸ Psalms 66:13-15 and 51:19 model presenting prescribed

³³³ Ac. 3:6-9; 4:21-22; 5:16; 8:7-8; 19:17-20.

³³⁴ Ac. 8:13.

³³⁵ As an experienced sorcerer, Simon was impressed with the superior power of the Holy Spirit. C. Peter Wagner sees Simon's conversion as genuine, his motives carnal and his remorse, once rebuked, authentic. Susan Garrett sees Simon's past as a diabolically-empowered sorcerer who has tasted god-like power and prestige a pernicious force that could only be subdued by repentance, intercession and the redemption of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil* (Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 75, as cited in C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Ventura: Regal, 2000), 176-177.

³³⁶ Spencer sees Simon's financially-backed request as more of a demand, since "give" is an imperative in 8:19. Due to the core value in Mediterranean Society of that day that held honor comes only at the expense of another's shame in a zero-sum, win-lose closed-system, Simon's request is an effort to regain some of his lost honor to the new spirituality. This is all the more offensive to the Apostles and to the Holy Spirit in this culture since it could be "viewed as a calculated move to devalue the apostles' good name". F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 98.

³³⁷ Acts 8:18-24.

³³⁸ Psalm 66:1; Ps. 66:1-12, 67:3-5.

offerings to motivate others to similar faithfulness. Psalm 66:16-20 utilizes theology in his testimony of how God hears the prayers of the pure in heart, motivating others to such purity and trust in God.

Nehemiah

Ezra and Nehemiah witnessed a profound spiritual change in the people after reading the Law of God, “making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.”³³⁹ In response to this exposure to biblical theology, the people celebrated the long-neglected feast of booths.³⁴⁰ This was followed by a large-scale confession and worship. Subsequently, the Levites used covenant theology, beginning with Abraham, the Exodus, Sinai, and God’s great compassion despite Israel’s rebellion. The Levites told how God faithfully delivered the Promised Land into the hands of his people. As the rebellion of God’s people recurred, God “handed them over to their enemies, who oppressed them.”³⁴¹ In their oppression, God’s people cried to the Lord for mercy. God compassionately delivered them from the hands of their enemies. This became a pattern of rebellion against God, oppression, cries to God for mercy, compassionate deliverance, followed by a return to evil behavior. The people at all levels confess their legacy of rebellion and commit themselves afresh to follow God wholeheartedly.

³³⁹ Neh. 8:8.

³⁴⁰ Neh. 8:13-18.

³⁴¹ Neh. 9:27.

Zechariah and Haggai

Zechariah and Haggai were prophets during the era of Jewish restoration from Babylonian captivity as noted in Nehemiah and Ezra.³⁴² Zechariah and Haggai each called the people of Judah to repentance as they encouraged and motivated them with theology to complete the rebuilding of the temple.³⁴³ Zechariah emphasizes God's sovereignty over history and nations, encouraging God's people with apocalyptic visions of future glory with the Lord for those who remain faithful.³⁴⁴ The Messianic oracles in Zech. 9-14 reveal the ultimate culmination of Judah's theological hope.

Haggai's treatment of Messianic theology tells of the "desired of all nations" whose coming will fill with glory the temple they are rebuilding.³⁴⁵

Jehoiada

In 2 Kings 11:17-18, Jehoiada made "a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD'S people." which motivated the people to tear down the temple of Baal.³⁴⁶

For Bringing an Offering to God

Moses and the Tabernacle

In Exodus 35, Moses shares with the people the theology of Sabbath rest.³⁴⁷ Then Moses shares God's command to bring a free will offering of

³⁴² Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Nehemiah 12:1-16.

³⁴³ Zechariah 4:8-10; 8:9; Hag. 1-2.

³⁴⁴ God's sovereignty: Zech 7:13-14; 8:7-17; Apocalyptic vision: Zech. 1:7-6:8.

³⁴⁵ Haggai 2:7.

³⁴⁶ 2 Kings 11:17.

³⁴⁷ Ex. 35:1-3.

specific articles, including skilled craftsmen to make articles for the Tabernacle according to divine specifications.³⁴⁸ The people responded to the extent Moses had to order them to stop, for they had more than enough to do all the work.³⁴⁹

2 Corinthians 9

Paul uses natural theology (sowing and reaping) to motivate the Achaians to follow-through with their offering to the poor.³⁵⁰ Paul uses a standard deliberation format. Paul presents his conclusion, then uses that to launch into a second appeal. Mack says,

In the first section, the argument is that one will be rewarded. In the second, the appeal is to honor. By treating the conclusion of the argumentation in v. 10 as the subtle introduction of a new encomiastic theme or thesis, the link can be seen that joins the two major sections of this exhortation.³⁵¹

Paul alludes to the Proverb when he notes that “God loves a cheerful giver.”³⁵² The context enables us to understand God loves, or blesses, a cheerful giver by making all His grace, or generosity, abound, so that whatever comes, they will have all they need and enough to share with others.³⁵³ Likewise, their faithfulness in this offering will not only meet the need of the recipients, but will overflow through many thanksgivings to God.³⁵⁴ The law of sowing and reaping is thus applied personally and in terms of the spread of the Gospel.

³⁴⁸ Ex. 35:4-19.

³⁴⁹ Ex. 35:20-29; 36:1-7.

³⁵⁰ 2 Cor. 9:1-15.

³⁵¹ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 59.

³⁵² 2 Cor. 9:7. “A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.” Pv. 22:9.

³⁵³ 2 Cor. 9:8.

³⁵⁴ 2 Cor. 9:12.

For Restoring Church Unity

1 Corinthians 12-13

Using various body parts as a metaphor to appeal to various factions to cease striving and unify has also been found in secular sources in the ancient world.³⁵⁵ Paul is unique in his appeal to the stronger or more affluent to give more honor to the weak or poor in the “Body”.³⁵⁶ ³⁵⁷ Paul opens this section with a statement that shocked if not offended his audience, saying “I do not want you to be ignorant” about the subject of spiritual gifts, which many in Corinth prided themselves in their accomplishments in this area.³⁵⁸ Paul persuaded the Corinthians to see their gifts, not as competing but as complementary; each essential to the vitality of the church.

Paul digresses in 1 Cor. 13 in a way that is central to his deliberative argument that love validates their use of gifts.³⁵⁹ Their misuse of tongues, addressed later in 1 Corinthians 14:2 ff., is put in its proper perspective in 13:1. Knowledge, addressed in chapter 8, is returned to its proper context of agape love in 13:2. In verse three, the apostle cautions that the most extravagant sacrifice misses the mark if not guided by love. In contrast to the destructive effect of factions and discord, Paul demonstrates in this chapter how “love builds up.”³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ Cf. Plutarch, *Cor. 6*; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 6.86; Livy 2:32. See also M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 157-64, as cited in Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 253-254.

³⁵⁶ M. Agrippa used this analogy to pressure the revolting peasants to submit to those in authority, as cited in Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 254.

³⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 12:21-25.

³⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 12:1. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 256.

³⁵⁹ Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, gen. ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 627.

³⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 8:1.

Paul's shift in voice from second person plural in chapter 12 to first person singular in the midst of 12:31 as he transitions into chapter 13 draws in his audience to hear a personal word from their instructor.³⁶¹ In this way Paul appeals to his audience to live in the love of God rather than their human nature.

For Equipping Leaders

Jethro

Jethro motivates Moses to delegate responsibility by teaching him principles of empowering leadership. These principles include instruction in God's Word, the imperative of a consistent, obedient life, and a clear job description.³⁶² These principles also include selecting capable men who fear God, are committed to doing God's will, whose character makes them trustworthy and above reproach.³⁶³

Responding to Church Growth Issues

Rapid growth in the early church led to an ethnic crisis that threatened the unity of the church and the spread of the Gospel.³⁶⁴ Not only were the apostles about to be distracted by this situation, but it threatened the testimony of the love of the Christian fellowship as well.³⁶⁵ The Twelve instruct the community to select seven men, "full of the Spirit and wisdom" to tend to the neglected

³⁶¹ Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 2.2.8; cf. Seneca *Ep.* 6.3-5; 71.7, as cited in Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 266.

³⁶² Ex. 18:20.

³⁶³ Ex. 18:21.

³⁶⁴ Ac. 6:1-7.

³⁶⁵ John 13:34-35.

widows.³⁶⁶ This ethnic conflict required an insightful sociological as well as spiritual solution. Sociologically, the apostles appointed seven men with Greek names to conduct the program to feed the Greek widows who had been neglected. Spiritually, their criteria for the seven included Spiritual anointing. The apostles prayed for the seven as they commissioned them in their ministry.³⁶⁷

This ecclesiastical restructuring in response to an unprecedented situation enabled the apostles to maintain their primary focus of Gospel ministry as well as empowered the Seven to mature into a greater level of responsibility. This faithful decision to restructure resulted in a significant spread of the Gospel and increase in the number of disciples, including a large number of priests.³⁶⁸

1 Timothy

Motivating change with theology is basic to the Apostle Paul's counsel to his protégé Timothy, when he said, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."³⁶⁹ Paul states his purpose in the opening verses of this letter, urging Timothy to "command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer."³⁷⁰ Paul instructs Timothy to be authoritative, rather than persuasive, in his approach to these false teachers. However, a significant part of Timothy's authority, not only before these false teachers, but all who take note of his ministry, is his consistent modeling and teaching of sound doctrine.

³⁶⁶ Ac. 6:3.

³⁶⁷ Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* 126.

³⁶⁸ Acts 6:7.

³⁶⁹ 1 Tim. 4:16 .

³⁷⁰ 1 Tim. 1:3 .

In 1 Timothy, Paul instructs this young preacher on ecclesiology,³⁷¹ including silencing false teachers,³⁷² God's grace despite human failure,³⁷³ prayer in public worship,³⁷⁴ women in public worship,³⁷⁵ overseers and deacons,³⁷⁶ doctrinal purity in the face of false teaching,³⁷⁷ loving relationships in the church,³⁷⁸ ministry to widows,³⁷⁹ instructions about elders,³⁸⁰ instructions concerning slaves,³⁸¹ corruptors of godliness with contentment,³⁸² personal integrity,³⁸³ and true riches.³⁸⁴

2 Timothy

In 2 Timothy, Paul mentors his young protégé on ministry essentials including remaining steadfast in God's strength despite hardship,³⁸⁵ purity of life and doctrine,³⁸⁶ facing increased apostasy,³⁸⁷ and finishing well.³⁸⁸

³⁷¹ Fee observes that Timothy and Titus are "itinerants on special assignment...not permanent resident pastors." As one applies the truth in these Holy Spirit-inspired letters, recognize the *ad hoc* nature of these epistles. Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus: A Good News Commentary, New Testament* ed. W. Ward Gasque (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), xxxii-xxxiii.

³⁷² 1 Tim. 1:3-11.

³⁷³ 1 Tim. 1:12-20.

³⁷⁴ 1 Tim. 2:1-8.

³⁷⁵ 1 Tim. 2:9-15.

³⁷⁶ 1 Tim. 3:1-13.

³⁷⁷ 1 Tim. 4:1-16.

³⁷⁸ 1 Tim. 5:1-2.

³⁷⁹ 1 Tim. 5:3-16.

³⁸⁰ 1 Tim. 5:17-25.

³⁸¹ 1 Tim. 6:1-2.

³⁸² 1 Tim. 6:3-10.

³⁸³ 1 Tim. 6:11-16, 20-21.

³⁸⁴ 1 Tim. 6:17-19.

³⁸⁵ 2 Tim. 1:6-14; 2:1-13.

³⁸⁶ 2 Tim. 2:14-26.

³⁸⁷ 2 Tim. 3:1-9.

³⁸⁸ 2 Tim. 3:10-4:8.

Titus

Paul's letter to Titus includes instructions on elder qualifications,³⁸⁹ false teachers,³⁹⁰ instructions for godly saints,³⁹¹ and our miraculous transformation in Christ.³⁹²

For Godly Living

In Response to God's Mercy

God's name, Yahweh, is introduced in Exodus 3:14 and 6:2, identifying Yahweh as Israel's redeemer from Egyptian slavery. God's name, Yahweh is used again in Exodus 20:2, along with the renowned formula of Scripture that follows, "who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery,"³⁹³ which together serve as a theological rationale for instituting the ethical and moral requirements of the Law given on Mt. Sinai.

Proverbs

Solomon motivates the readers of Proverbs with a theology of wisdom. He writes, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."³⁹⁴ Solomon seeks to motivate his audience to avoid the

³⁸⁹ Titus 1:6-9.

³⁹⁰ Titus 1:10-16.

³⁹¹ Titus 2:1-3:2, 9-10, 14.

³⁹² Titus 3:3-8.

³⁹³ Ex. 20:2. This formula is "used 125 times to describe the character and graciousness of Yahweh." Walter C. Keiser, Jr., "Exodus," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, Vol. 2, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 422.

³⁹⁴ Prov. 1:7. Also: "For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." (2:6.); "By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew." (3:19-20 .); "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (9:10.); "The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor." (15:33.); "There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD. (21:30.).

enticements of sinners,³⁹⁵ wicked men,³⁹⁶ adulteress,³⁹⁷ folly or perverse ways.³⁹⁸ He also expounds upon the benefits of wisdom, including God's protection,³⁹⁹ God's blessing,⁴⁰⁰ and justice.⁴⁰¹

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 is a reprieve from the somber pessimism of earlier chapters. The writer does use the theology of providence and Divine sovereignty in 3:9-15 to motive readers to revere God and find enduring purpose in their labor, saying,

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him. Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.⁴⁰²

Romans

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans was written to motivate change in behavior by exposing them to theology. The first chapter contrasts the monistic

³⁹⁵ Pv. 1:10-19.

³⁹⁶ Pv. 2:12-15.

³⁹⁷ Pv. 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27.

³⁹⁸ Pv. 6:1-19; 9:13-18.

³⁹⁹ Pv. 2:6-11.

⁴⁰⁰ Pv. 3:1-18; 8:18-21, 32-36; 9:10-12.

⁴⁰¹ Pv. 8:12-17.

⁴⁰² Eccl. 3:9-15.

pantheism of the day with biblical theology.⁴⁰³ Paul then addresses the universal need for justification⁴⁰⁴ and the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.⁴⁰⁵ Chapter six addresses the threat of antinomianism.

Romans 6:1-11 illustrates Paul's incorporation of the indicative and the imperative in his eschatological ethics.⁴⁰⁶ The imperative does not limit the certainty of the indicative; the indicative does not take away the impact of the imperative. "Rather, in solidarity with each other, the believer's life, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (indicative), is a life of service in the new being of the Spirit (imperative)...All the imperatives of Paul have their basis in what has happened to us through Christ in baptism."⁴⁰⁷ These may be summarized in Paul's words, "Set your hearts on things above".⁴⁰⁸

Life in the Spirit is covered in Romans 8. God's promises concerning Israel and God's ultimate mercy are presented in chapters 9-11. Further practical applications of Paul's theology are presented in chapters 12-16.

Philippians

Paul uses deliberative rhetoric in the book of Philippians. "The three features of deliberative rhetoric—appeal to the common good, argument against

⁴⁰³ These ancient Canaanite beliefs that promote worshipping and serving created things rather than the creator (Rom 1:25) have confounded God's people throughout the ages. Documentation of this corruption includes the time Aaron fashioned a gold calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai in Ex. 32:1ff. These same deceptions can be found in *sic* "Interfaith" services today, as evidenced in "Interfaith Service set to Pray For Rain" *The Daily Item*, 28 April 2006, B1-2.

⁴⁰⁴ Ro. 1:18-3:20.

⁴⁰⁵ Ro. 3:21-31.

⁴⁰⁶ William D. Dennison, "Indicative and Imperative: The Basic Structure of Pauline Ethics," *Calvin Theological Journal* 14 (1979): 59.

⁴⁰⁷ Dennison, "Indicative and Imperative," 65.

⁴⁰⁸ Col 3:1.

factionalism, and the use of examples as proof—are interrelated in Philippians.”⁴⁰⁹ Deliberative rhetoric addresses motivating positive change in future behavior by confirming values currently held.⁴¹⁰ These values include the Gospel of Christ and particularly the partnership Paul and the Philippians share in the Gospel mission.⁴¹¹ In Philippians 2:8 the obedience of Christ is the paradigm for “free obedience.”⁴¹² In Phil. 2:5-11, Paul uses Christ’s obedience as an “incentive of love” to motivate the obedience of the Philippian church.^{413 414}

Paul opens by establishing rapport with his audience in Philippi by expressing his concern for the Philippians,⁴¹⁵ his love and yearning for them⁴¹⁶ citing their partnership in the Gospel,⁴¹⁷ and noting their shared opposition against those bringing division.^{418 419}

The thesis of Paul’s Philippian letter states, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and

⁴⁰⁹ Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 96.

⁴¹⁰ See Watson, “Rhetorical Analysis,” 57-88. In his rhetorical analysis, L. Gregory Bloomquist (*Function of Suffering*, 119-120) concludes that Philippians is best characterized as deliberative. See Schussler Fiorenza, “Rhetorical Situation,” 391. See also Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 24-25, as cited in Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 94.

⁴¹¹ Phil. 1:5, 27, 4:3, 2:6-11.

⁴¹² Ernst Kasemann, “Critical Analysis,” 72, as cited in Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 53.

⁴¹³ Victor Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 182-187, as cited in Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 53.

⁴¹⁴ Phil. 2:12-18.

⁴¹⁵ Phil. 1:8-11.

⁴¹⁶ Phil. 1:7-9.

⁴¹⁷ Phil. 1:5-7.

⁴¹⁸ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 66.

⁴¹⁹ Phil. 1:14-17.

see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.”⁴²⁰

Paul presents Christ as the motivating focus for the church.⁴²¹ He provides motivation for their behavioral response in alternating negative terms⁴²² followed by positive motivation.⁴²³

Christ is presented as the first positive example⁴²⁴ utilizing a hymn extolling Christ’s voluntary humility and obedience and God’s exaltation. The application section⁴²⁵ opens with the conjunction ώστε, indicating what follows is a logical consequence of what precedes.⁴²⁶

Timothy and Epaphroditus are presented as the second positive example.⁴²⁷ In Paul’s absence, sending Timothy who, “as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel”⁴²⁸ provides a positive model to encourage unity and obedience.⁴²⁹ Likewise, Epaphroditus, who is commended as “my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier.”⁴³⁰

The “Dogs” serve as a negative example followed by Paul presenting himself as a positive example.⁴³¹ Paul contrasts those “dogs,... those mutilators of

⁴²⁰ Phil. 1:27.

⁴²¹ Phil. 2:1-4.

⁴²² Phil. 2:3a; 4a.

⁴²³ Phil. 2:3b; 4b.

⁴²⁴ Phil. 2:6-11.

⁴²⁵ Phil. 2:12-18.

⁴²⁶ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 84.

⁴²⁷ Phil. 2:19-30.

⁴²⁸ Phil. 2:22.

⁴²⁹ “I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.” Phil. 2:20. Paul contrasts Timothy positively with those who look out for their own interests. (2:21).

⁴³⁰ Phil. 2:25.

⁴³¹ Phil. 3:1-21.

the flesh”⁴³² as “enemies of the cross of Christ”⁴³³ in sharp contrast to himself.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁵

Paul’s terms of deep affection in 4:1 contrast sharply with the invective of 3:18-19. Paul returns to his thesis, stated in 1:27, as he urges the Philippians to stand firm in 4:1. Paul creates a sharp juxtaposition between the external threats to unity in chapter 3 with the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche within the Philippian church.⁴³⁶ While often treated as extraneous, Kittredge notes, “Rhetorical analysis and attention to the use of obedience language in Philippians supports the argument that these verses are very significant in the letter and suggests that Euodia and Syntyche should be considered central to the rhetorical problem.”⁴³⁷

Paul closes in a manner similar to his opening, recounting the Philippians’ dedication and their shared bonds of affection, followed by a benediction for God’s blessing upon them.⁴³⁸

Ephesians

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is viewed as deliberative rhetoric.⁴³⁹

Appealing to shared values and doctrinal convictions, Paul seeks to persuade his

⁴³² Phil. 3:2.

⁴³³ Phil. 3:18.

⁴³⁴ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 89.

⁴³⁵ Phil. 3:4-21.

⁴³⁶ Phil. 4:2-3.

⁴³⁷ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 93.

⁴³⁸ Phil. 4:10-20.

⁴³⁹ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 145-147.

audience to choose a view of *ekklesia* that unites in Christ believers once alienated through worldly divisions.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is divided by scholars into two primary sections: 1:1-3:21 and 4:1-6:23.⁴⁴⁰ These two sections are labeled "affirmations" and "appeals" respectively. Bultmann used the terms the "indicative" and the "imperative," respectively. The indicative refers to the revelation or theology of which the imperative follows as an application to life and practice.

Paul opens by establishing rapport with his audience, not based on their shared history of personal interactions, but by recounting their divine election which traces back "before the creation of the world".⁴⁴¹ This underscores their foundational, essential heritage in God which supersedes any temporal dynamics. Paul uses liturgical language,⁴⁴² perhaps from a familiar baptismal liturgy, to express God's work in Christ to unite these believers in the salvation they share.⁴⁴³ Paul concludes his *exordium* by introducing in 1:22 *τη ἐκκλησία*, the salvation community. The identity, role and structure of the *ekklesia* comprise another major argument Paul develops later in this letter.⁴⁴⁴ Also, Christ is "head

⁴⁴⁰ This division is widely accepted. See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xxxvi, as cited in Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 116.

⁴⁴¹ Eph. 1:4.

⁴⁴² Eph. 1:3-14.

⁴⁴³ "Some of the language in the eulogy has a close connection with baptism ('chose us,' 'sonship,' 'good pleasure,' 'beloved,' and 'marked with the seal of the promised holy Spirit')."

Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 122-123.

⁴⁴⁴ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 123.

over everything for the church”⁴⁴⁵ rather than head *over* the church, another argument Paul gradually develops throughout his rhetorical presentation.⁴⁴⁶

Paul’s *narratio*⁴⁴⁷ is presented in two parts, contrasting the Ephesians’ Gentile past without Christ with their Christian present. The living dead⁴⁴⁸ are not merely guilty of “trespasses and sins”,⁴⁴⁹ but are actually (wittingly or unwittingly) followers of that diabolical ruler who is “now at work among those who are disobedient.”⁴⁵⁰ This shared adversary⁴⁵¹ disrupts the emphasis on all that Christ has completed, having put “everything under his feet” and Christ as the “head over everything for the church” in the opening chapter.⁴⁵² In light of Ephesus’ history with sorcery before Paul brought the Gospel to them, Paul’s audience was likely well acquainted with oppressive spiritual forces and eager to hear Paul’s teaching on Christ’s greater power available to believers.⁴⁵³

The Good News begins in verse 4, where God’s great love and abundant mercy “made us alive with Christ”.⁴⁵⁴ Paul’s shift from the second person plural⁴⁵⁵ to the first person plural⁴⁵⁶ further identifies their new life in Christ and their inclusion with the community of the redeemed. Paul uses the word

⁴⁴⁵ Eph. 1:22.

⁴⁴⁶ “Rather than present the full-fledged picture of hierarchy from the beginning, to which the audience might object, the author seeks to gain audience acceptance of each successive detail...until it is finally completed in Eph. 5:21-6:9.” Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 124.

⁴⁴⁷ Eph. 2:1-21.

⁴⁴⁸ Eph. 2:1-3.

⁴⁴⁹ Eph. 2:1.

⁴⁵⁰ Eph. 2:2 NRSV.

⁴⁵¹ Eph. 2:2.

⁴⁵² Eph. 1:22. This present threat is also referred to in 3:10, 4:14, 5:6, and 6:11-12.

⁴⁵³ Acts 19:17-20. See also, Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (SNTSMS 63, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 69, as cited in Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 125.

⁴⁵⁴ Eph. 2:4-5.

⁴⁵⁵ Eph. 2:1-3.

⁴⁵⁶ Eph. 2:4ff.

περιεπατήσατε in verse 2 and verse 10 to contrast the old way of life and the new way in Christ “which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”⁴⁵⁷

Paul returns to emphasizing the sense of separation, alienation and hopelessness Gentiles had before Christ in 2:11-12. This serves to accentuate the audience’s pathos and appreciation of their union, both Gentile and Jew “in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross”.⁴⁵⁸

Paul opens Eph. 2:11-21 with the word, *μνημονεύετε* (‘remember’) followed by *ότι*, signaling a tradition follows. The language of baptism further emphasizes the contrast between once and now, reminding the audience who were once “without hope and without God in the world” of their new identity as reconciled in Christ and who have become one with those who were once the object of hostility.⁴⁵⁹ This language refers to corporate reconciliation, rather than simply individual believers. The focus of 2:14-18 is the union of Gentiles and Jews as equal members in the church of Jesus Christ through whom “both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”⁴⁶⁰

The following passage⁴⁶¹ is a strategic digression (*digressio*) to further authentic Paul’s apostolic authority. Paul uses the term *τὸ μυστήριον* three times in this section,⁴⁶² presenting himself as the interpreter of the mystery God has revealed to him.⁴⁶³ The Ephesians have also heard this mystery, namely, God’s

⁴⁵⁷ Eph. 2:10 NRSV.

⁴⁵⁸ Eph. 2:16.

⁴⁵⁹ Eph. 2:14-18.

⁴⁶⁰ Eph. 2:18.

⁴⁶¹ Eph. 3:1-21.

⁴⁶² Eph. 3:3, 3:4, and 3:9.

⁴⁶³ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 131.

plan to incorporate the Gentiles in the redeemed people of God. Paul incorporates his authority to apply this mystery to the ekklēsia in 5:32, building on the credibility established in this *digressio*.

Paul builds a sense of urgency and purpose in his readers by focusing on their common adversary⁴⁶⁴ and by declaring God's divine mystery will be revealed to these enemy spiritual powers.⁴⁶⁵ Paul closes this section with an extensive prayer,⁴⁶⁶ further authenticating his role as interpreter of God's mystery.

This next section⁴⁶⁷ applies Paul's theology of ethics, which includes avoiding pagan sensuality,⁴⁶⁸ and adopting integrity, wholesome talk, and forgiveness,⁴⁶⁹ purity,⁴⁷⁰ and sober wisdom⁴⁷¹ in relations with household members, including spouses, children, parents, slaves and masters.⁴⁷² Ephesians 5:21-6:9 applies his ethic to daily household relationships between spouses, children and parents, slaves and masters as a strategy to motivate his audience to apply this theme of reconciling opposites to the unity of Gentile converts and Jewish believers in the church.

According to the letter's rhetorical structure, this exhortation opens⁴⁷³ and concludes near the end⁴⁷⁴ with an appeal for unity, not simply in the marriage

⁴⁶⁴ Eph. 2:2.

⁴⁶⁵ Eph. 3:10.

⁴⁶⁶ Eph. 3:14-21.

⁴⁶⁷ Eph. 4:1-6:9.

⁴⁶⁸ Eph. 4:17-24.

⁴⁶⁹ Eph. 4:25-32.

⁴⁷⁰ Eph. 5:3-7.

⁴⁷¹ Eph. 5:15-18.

⁴⁷² Eph. 5:21-6:9.

⁴⁷³ Eph. 4:1-5.

⁴⁷⁴ Eph. 5:31-32.

bond but in the corporate life of the *ekklesia*.⁴⁷⁵ “The author’s emphasis on unity and on *ekklesia* holds the *exhortatio* together and indeed builds the argument from 4:1 to 6:9.”⁴⁷⁶

Paul develops his argument that Christ is the ‘head’,⁴⁷⁷ of this one, unified body, by integrating earlier assertions.⁴⁷⁸ The progression starts in 1:10 when Paul declares that in the fullness of time God will “gather up all things” in heaven and on earth in Christ.⁴⁷⁹ Then Christ is declared “the head over all things for the church, which is his body”.⁴⁸⁰ Finally, Christ is introduced in 4:15 as the head (ο εστιν η κεφαλή, Χριστός) to whom all believers unify together and aspire to grow toward. The role of Christ is established and expanded gradually throughout the letter to persuade an audience that may not initially recognize Christ’s headship.

Paul returns to the topic of supernatural opposition⁴⁸¹ introduced in 2:2-3 in this extended appeal to stand firm in the spiritual battle. The repeated use of πρόσ and various synonyms serves to intensify the sense of conflict. Paul reiterates that God empowers believers to take a critical role in this spiritual battle, using three different terms for the “strength” God supplies.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁵ Kittredge titles this section “relationships within the *ekklesia*.” Schnackenburg (*Ephesians*, 6) puts Eph 5:15-6:9 under the heading, “the Life of the Christian Congregation.” as cited in Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 133.

⁴⁷⁶ Kittredge, *Community and Authority*, 135.

⁴⁷⁷ κεφαλή, Eph. 4:15.

⁴⁷⁸ Paul refers to “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3) referring to Christ “who is our peace” (2:14) and the one Holy Spirit, “both of us have access in one spirit” (2:18).

⁴⁷⁹ Eph. 1:10 NRSV.

⁴⁸⁰ Eph. 1:22-23 NRSV.

⁴⁸¹ Eph. 6:10-20.

⁴⁸² Eph. 6:10. See also: 3:7, 16, 20.

Paul concludes this letter by redirecting his readers' attention from their relationships with each other, to focusing on overcoming the spiritual opposition and advancing the Gospel. Paul calls the Ephesians to prayer in 6:18 and asks that they pray for him, personally. Paul's reference to his imprisonment in 6:20 increases pathos as he motivates his readers to unify around the larger purpose of the Gospel and spiritual warfare.⁴⁸³ Paul's closes by announcing that Tychicus, "the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord" will come "that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you."⁴⁸⁴ This personal representative enhances their relational bond and accountability.

For Sound Doctrine

Galatians

Paul writes his letter to the Galatians due to the influence of the circumcision group upon a significant number of believers there. A "different gospel",⁴⁸⁵ recommending circumcision and other Jewish observances has attracted the Galatians, prompting Paul's letter.⁴⁸⁶ Paul's letter to the Galatians addresses an audience that is three-fold: "Gentile converts of Paul, Jewish Christians of conservative persuasion, and those Gentiles who were entertaining the thought of becoming circumcised and keeping other conventions of the Jewish law."⁴⁸⁷ Paul had the unenviable responsibility to counter-persuade and to

⁴⁸³ Eph. 6:12.

⁴⁸⁴ Eph 6:21-22.

⁴⁸⁵ Gal. 1:6 ESV.

⁴⁸⁶ Gal. 4:10, 5:2-12, 6:12-15.

⁴⁸⁷ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 67.

dissuade these Galatians.⁴⁸⁸ Kennedy sees Galatians as a deliberative appeal to continue in the Christian faith rather than fall back into Judaism.⁴⁸⁹ Kennedy understands Paul's biographic information in Gal. 1-2 and his exhortation in Gal. 5:1-6:10 as a deliberative call for the audience to take future action rather than primarily a defense of Paul himself.⁴⁹⁰

The absence of Paul recounting and refuting specific charges supports the deliberative approach that looks forward to the Galatians' renewed commitment to Paul and the Christian Gospel.⁴⁹¹

Paul states his proposition in Gal. 1:6-9, declaring his intent to demonstrate that no other gospel is credible except what Paul preached to them. To convey the imperative of his assertion, in the span of two verses Paul repeats the charge, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"⁴⁹²

The body of the letter⁴⁹³ is devoted to arguments designed to prove the proposition true. Paul opens with a narrative⁴⁹⁴ followed by a series of

⁴⁸⁸ Chinedu Adolphus Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians: A Rhetorical and Exegetical Analysis of Galatians 2,14-6,2* (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Athenaum Verlag, 1996), 15.

⁴⁸⁹ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 144-52, as cited in Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 67.

⁴⁹⁰ In contrast to Betz who sees the letter as a judicial defense of Paul's gospel of justification by faith rather than by works of the law. Betz also acknowledges Paul's use of apologetic to defend his apostleship and his teaching. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), as cited in Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 67.

⁴⁹¹ Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 257-258.

⁴⁹² Gal. 1:8 . Paul continues in the next verse, "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" Gal. 1:9b .

⁴⁹³ Gal. 1:10-6:10.

⁴⁹⁴ Gal. 1:10-2:21.

arguments.⁴⁹⁵ ⁴⁹⁶ Wilson outlines the entire book of Galatians as a chiastic structure that builds incrementally to the heart of Paul's Gospel message, which is justification by faith.⁴⁹⁷ Paul appeals both to his opponents and to his adherents by validating the limited, conditional purpose of the law, which anticipates Christ, "the true offspring of Abraham by whom, as Genesis promised, 'all the families of the earth shall be blessed'."⁴⁹⁸ ⁴⁹⁹ This is a strategic and theologically astute point, as Paul sets apart the period of the law as a temporary phase by tracing Christianity's roots, not to Moses, but to Abraham, the father of Israel. In this way Paul is able to "cancel out any claim that the Mosaic Law might be said to have upon Gentile Christians."⁵⁰⁰

Paul opens with the assertion that he is an apostle.⁵⁰¹ ⁵⁰² He later declares himself specifically as "an apostle to the Gentiles".⁵⁰³ Paul recognizes the imperative to establish the credibility to his apostleship lest the Gospel he brings be discredited as well.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁵ Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 259.

⁴⁹⁶ Gal. 3:1-6:10.

⁴⁹⁷ Wilson, *Divine Symmetries*, 261.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid, 263.

⁴⁹⁹ Gen. 12:3.

⁵⁰⁰ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 68.

⁵⁰¹ Paul asserts himself as an apostle in Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1; 15:9-10; 2 Cor. 1:1 and Gal. 1:1.

⁵⁰² Gal. 1:1.

⁵⁰³ Gal. 2:8.

⁵⁰⁴ Paul's apostleship is addressed first (1:1; 2:8), but the core issue in this letter to the Galatians is "the truth of the Gospel" (2:5, 14). Challenges to Paul's apostleship are addressed in 1 Cor. 9:2, "If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." Paul asserts he is not inferior to *sic super* apostles/false apostles in 2 Cor. 11:13. Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians*, 16.

In Galatians 2:11, Paul contrasts *Cephas*,⁵⁰⁵ an apostle to the Jews, or those circumcised, with himself, an apostle to the Gentiles, or the uncircumcised.^{506 507} Paul opposed Peter to his face, implicating Peter as somehow associated with the errant teaching corrupting some in Galatia.⁵⁰⁸ Without specifying Peter's infraction that prompted Paul's confrontation, Paul persuades the reader to see the situation from his viewpoint, unencumbered by a balanced treatment of the controversy. Paul presents the argument more fully in the next verses. However, Paul's rhetorical strategy in his introduction is worth noting.⁵⁰⁹

In the following verses⁵¹⁰ the issue developed is not about dietary laws⁵¹¹ but table fellowship in a Jewish-Gentile Christian church.^{512 513} Paul expands the implications of his argument to salvation through Christ alone for Gentile and Jew alike.⁵¹⁴ Peter, who ate with Cornelius and his Gentile companions after his vision and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10-11, now retreats from God's bold mission to include Gentiles in God's plan of redemption. Peter, who Jesus

⁵⁰⁵ Except for the account in John 1:42, when Jesus renames Simon Cephas, which is translated Peter, the other eight occurrences of Cephas in the New Testament are all in Paul's writings, specifically 1 Cor. and Gal. Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians*, 43-44.

⁵⁰⁶ Whether Peter held the place of authority in New Testament times he has since acquired in the history of the church is a matter of debate among scholars. Ibid, 44.

⁵⁰⁷ Gal 2:7-8.

⁵⁰⁸ Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians*, 48-49.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Gal 2: 12-21.

⁵¹¹ Gal 2:14.

⁵¹² Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians*, 49-51.

⁵¹³ Gal. 2:12-13.

⁵¹⁴ Gal. 2:15-21.

entrusted to “feed my lambs,”⁵¹⁵ has not only separated himself from these lambs Christ died to redeem, but is dividing the church.⁵¹⁶

Division in the church is the effect of Peter’s actions. The effects Paul cites are two-fold, the effect of Peter’s actions on the other Jews in Antioch, and the effect on Barnabas. Paul calls this act of separation that spread through the church in Antioch hypocrisy.⁵¹⁷ “The seriousness of his action lies in the fact that both Jews and Gentiles in Antioch had learnt to eat together...’Paul’s emphasis was on unity of the salvation in Christ; the Jews’ emphasis was on cultic separation.’⁵¹⁸ But this cultic separation left a united community, divided. It is not clear if the wound inflicted ever healed.”⁵¹⁹ Paul leads into the ultimate effect that prompts his outrage in vs. 14, that “they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.”⁵²⁰

A notable transition occurs beginning in verse 15. In contrast to Gal 2:11-14, where Paul distanced himself from the hypocrisy described there by the Jews, beginning in verse 15, Paul now includes himself with the Jews. His tone also changes from confrontational and denunciating to theological and he reiterates the soteriological foundation of the Gospel.⁵²¹

Paul opens this section by identifying with the cultic separation at work in Galatia by introducing an antithetical Jewish saying, which positioned Jews above

⁵¹⁵ Jn. 21:15-17.

⁵¹⁶ Gal. 2:13.

⁵¹⁷ Gal. 2:13.

⁵¹⁸ H. D. Betz, *Galatians*, (Philadelphia: Hermeneia, 1979), 106, as cited in Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians*, 54.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 54.

⁵²⁰ Gal. 2:14 .

⁵²¹ Amadi-Azuogu, *Paul and the Law in the Arguments of Galatians*, 64-67.

Gentile sinners.⁵²² The rite of circumcision identified Jews as God's covenant people. By keeping the law, these covenant people were set apart by God as holy.⁵²³ The main thesis of the entire letter to Galatians is found in 2:16.⁵²⁴ "The decision of these Jewish Christians to believe in Jesus Christ manifests their conviction that they too, like the Gentiles, are sinners and in need of redemption, and that, as sinners, they can reach justification only through faith in Christ, not through works of the Law."⁵²⁵

In verse 21, Paul refutes any charge that he corrupts the grace of God by setting his argument in an "either-or" framework. That is, either salvation is through the Law and therefore Christ died in vain, or, Christ did not die in vain because his death has soteriological value.⁵²⁶ In this case, justification cannot be through the Law.

1 Corinthians 15

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, Paul reasons with the Corinthians that there will be a resurrection using a deliberative approach with some judicial strategies interspersed.⁵²⁷ Paul strengthens his argument when, after stating his point, counters questions that might be raised to refute his assertion.⁵²⁸

⁵²² Ibid, 64-65.

⁵²³ "Although the law had the capacity to justify, this was only possible to those who fulfilled all its prescriptions." Ibid, 69-70.

⁵²⁴ Ibid, 67.

⁵²⁵ J. Lambrecht, "The Line of Thought in Galatians 2:14b-21," *NTS* 24, (1977-78): 487, as cited in Ibid, 86.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 95.

⁵²⁷ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 56-57.

⁵²⁸ Some say there is no resurrection from the dead (15:12-19), how are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have? (15:35).

Paul assumes the resurrection of Christ as a fact. None of Paul's arguments are designed to defend the reality of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Rather, given the fact that Christ is risen, Paul demonstrates the certainty of the resurrection of the dead. Paul uses the resurrection of Christ as his springboard to convince his audience through the following *sorites* (interlocking chain):

"If Christ is not raised, then preaching is in vain.

If preaching is vain, then your faith is vain.

If faith is vain, then you are yet in your sins.

If sin is still victor, then the dead have perished.

If that is the case, then we are to be pitied."⁵²⁹

Besides the pathetic outcome of Christ-followers if Christ has not been raised from the dead, Paul also insinuates the apostles are guilty of being false witnesses about God if God did not actually raise Jesus from the dead.⁵³⁰

Taking a positive tact, Paul introduces another *sorites* chronicling a series of eschatological events to provide logical consistency to the notion of the resurrection of the dead. Comparing and contrasting Adam and Christ as corporate symbols, Paul shows how just as death comes to all through Adam, the resurrection of the dead comes through Christ.⁵³¹ Next, the Kingdom of Christ is victorious over every enemy.⁵³² Christ will reign over them as they yield in full

⁵²⁹ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 57.

⁵³⁰ 1 Cor. 15:15.

⁵³¹ 1 Cor. 15:21.

⁵³² 1 Cor. 15:24.

submission to God.⁵³³ Paul appeals to his audience to avoid being pitiful and to embrace Christ's eminent eschatological victory.

Paul uses two analogies to present the plausibility of a physical body for life on earth and a spiritual body for the day of resurrection. Paul uses the analogy of a seed and of various kinds of seeds, to show that sowing a physical body in death anticipates the raising of a spiritual body.⁵³⁴ Paul asserts, "If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body."⁵³⁵

Second, Paul uses the analogy of Adam, who, formed from the dust, became a living being.⁵³⁶ Paul expands the role of Adam who brought death, but who yields to the completion of Christ's better way. Burton Mack explains the need for sequential arrangement,

First is the physical, then the spiritual; first the man from the earth, then the man from heaven; first the bearing of the Adam image, then the bearing of the Christ image. The incremental shifts eventuate in the pronouncement, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.'⁵³⁷

"Paul uses a didactic style of accommodation and correction in vv. 35-57."⁵³⁸ Paul shows that there are two realms of habitation; one celestial and the other terrestrial. Paul argues this cosmology is consistent with the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor. 15:39-44a. Paul continues in vv. 50-57 to refute the contrariety

⁵³³ 1 Cor. 15:25.

⁵³⁴ 1 Cor. 15:35-44.

⁵³⁵ 1 Cor. 15:44 NRSV.

⁵³⁶ Gen. 2:7.

⁵³⁷ Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 58.

⁵³⁸ Jeffrey R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection* (Tubingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000), 206.

objection to the resurrection, explaining how “the terrestrial body will be changed into a celestial one.”⁵³⁹

The Angel of the Lord

Rather than a human being, the Angel of the Lord used theology in terms of a Word from the Lord to motivate Elijah to speak a word of judgment to King Ahaziah’s messengers.⁵⁴⁰ After two companies of soldiers were killed with fire from heaven, their fate motivated the third captain to beg Elijah for mercy. Elijah used theology in terms of a Word from the Lord to pronounce judgment on King Ahaziah.⁵⁴¹

The Angel motivated Joseph to continue with his plans to marry Mary using the theology of Immaculate Conception in Matthew 2:20-25.

People Motivate God to Change Using Theology

Solomon at the Temple Dedication

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prays⁵⁴² that God will remember His great love promised to David⁵⁴³ asking God to forgive His people when they whole-heartedly repent and pray to Him in light of the temple built for God’s Name.⁵⁴⁴

⁵³⁹ Ibid, 91-145.

⁵⁴⁰ 2 Ki. 1:2-6.

⁵⁴¹ 2 Ki. 1:9-17.

⁵⁴² 2 Chron. 6:14-42.

⁵⁴³ Davidic covenant, 2 Chron. 6:14-15, 42.

⁵⁴⁴ 2 Chron. 6:36-39.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah's forthright confession in 20:7-10 is a brutally frank *inclusio* appealing to God for mercy. Jeremiah 20:7 opens, "O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed."⁵⁴⁵ This poem concludes with Jeremiah's opening charge against Yahweh being imposed upon Jeremiah by his "friends of shalom",⁵⁴⁶ a reference to their duplicity. Verse 10 reads, "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him."⁵⁴⁷ This poetic unit "preserves the ambiguity so often existing in real life situations. Certainty must come sometime later."⁵⁴⁸ Allowing the poetic unit⁵⁴⁹ to stand alone renders this unit as a brusque appeal to God for mercy. The companion poem in verses 11-13 brings resolution to the *inclusio* in 7-10. Together, these verses illustrate Jeremiah's passionate appeal to Judah to trust in God regardless of the oppressive circumstances.

Jeremiah 14:7-9 is a liturgical prayer of confession in response to the judgment oracle⁵⁵⁰ preceding it.⁵⁵¹ The key words that frame the *inclusio* are found in verse 7, "Although our sins testify against us, O LORD, do something for the sake of your name,"⁵⁵² and in verse 9, "You are among us, O LORD, and we bear your name; do not forsake us!"⁵⁵³ "The *inclusio* focuses on the poet's main intent, i.e., to persuade Yahweh that only *by saving Israel* he will save his

⁵⁴⁵ Jer. 20:7.

⁵⁴⁶ Jer. 20:10.

⁵⁴⁷ Jer. 20:10.

⁵⁴⁸ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 65.

⁵⁴⁹ Jer. 20:7-10.

⁵⁵⁰ Jer. 14:2-6.

⁵⁵¹ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 61.

⁵⁵² Jer. 14:7.

⁵⁵³ Jer. 14:9.

own name. Yahweh's name is inextricably tied up with the fate of his people, and their defeat will harm his as well.”⁵⁵⁴

The Canaanite Woman

When Jesus encountered the Canaanite woman who cried out for mercy for her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus did not respond to her until his disciples asked him to send her away. Jesus then answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”⁵⁵⁵ When the woman fell to her knees and pleaded earnestly with Jesus, he continued, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”⁵⁵⁶ The woman replied with this reasoned appeal for mercy, “‘Yes, Lord,’ she said, ‘but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’”⁵⁵⁷ Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”⁵⁵⁸

Here Jesus was motivated to change by this woman’s faith, humility, and bold assertion of God’s mercy, even to outcasts such as herself. Whether Jesus’ initial resistance was genuine or his way to establish a teachable moment for his disciples or for this woman, Jesus’ behavior turned favorable in response to the woman’s asserting her faith in Jesus.

⁵⁵⁴ Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 62.

⁵⁵⁵ Mt. 15:24.

⁵⁵⁶ Mt. 15:26.

⁵⁵⁷ This woman deviates sharply from the thinking in Mediterranean Society of that day that held to a zero-sum, win-lose closed-system. For her to benefit would have been at a loss for the Jewish “children” Jesus refers to. For her to suggest this “win-win” alternative deviates from this perspective. Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts*, 98. See also Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 5.

⁵⁵⁸ Mt. 15:27-28.

God Motivates People to Resist Change Using Theology

Anticipating Israel's entrance into Canaan, God used a theology of holiness to warn the Israelites to "not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there."⁵⁵⁹ God uses covenant theology, particularly elements of providence and judgment to urge Israel and their descendants to resist any pressure to change the focus of their worship to include other gods.⁵⁶⁰

Summary

This chapter examined biblical and theological issues raised by this project, including accounts of God and people motivating change with theology. First, this chapter presented an introductory theology of God's special revelation. In particular, this chapter presented the authority of the Word of God in Scripture and Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection as authoritative for the church's faith and practice.

Second, this chapter examined biblical grounds for assessing the need for change. Using Nehemiah's rebuilding endeavor as a point of reference, a biblical hermeneutic incorporating the dynamic and static dimensions in church life was presented. This provided a framework based on biblical principles for churches and church leaders to determine needed resources to rehabilitate areas of deficiency in order to bring their church to conformity with God's purposes.

⁵⁵⁹ Dt. 18:9-13.

⁵⁶⁰ Dt. 11:16-21.

Third, this chapter examined biblical illustrations of change in general as well as God-initiated change and people's resistance to divinely ordained change. Biblical examples of leaders coping with such resistance were also presented.

Fourth, biblical instances of motivating change with theology were examined. These scriptural accounts demonstrated how God the Father motivates change using theology. Then scriptural accounts demonstrating how God the Son motivates change using theology were presented. Three characteristics were highlighted: evidence of Jesus (1) presenting an authentic message, (2) presenting Himself as an authentic messenger, and (3) clearly communicating His message. Scriptural accounts were presented demonstrating how people in the Old and New Testaments motivate change using theology. These accounts included biblical instances of individuals proclaiming the Word of the Lord generally and also with a particular intent. The differentiation between a herald of the Gospel and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit was presented.

Biblical illustrations of people motivating God to change using theology were presented. An incident where God motivates people to resist hurtful change was included. The process of motivating change in the church and the larger issue of motivation will be examined in the literature review in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the phenomena of change as a natural part of life and in the church. This is foundational because the church's ministry effectiveness is impacted by the way the church responds to change. This is important in light of the fact that 85 percent of established churches in America are stagnant in membership or in decline, suggesting that most churches are not adapting to change successfully.

In addition, in order to motivate parishioners to implement appropriate change, the theory of motivation will be discussed. Leaders implementing change will face resistance to change. Reasons for resistance and motivational strategies to overcome resistance to change will be discussed.

Last, factors necessitating ecclesiastical change and ways to implement change will be discussed. An historical overview of ecclesiastical change will focus on leaders in the Church Growth Movement. A summary of contemporary strategies for implementing ecclesiastical change will also be presented.

The Phenomena of Change

Change is Natural

Change is a natural part of life. Seasons change. People go through developmental stages as their bodies grow and mature. The term *change* comes from the old French *changer* meaning to “bend” or ‘turn,’ like a tree or vine searching for the sun. The idea that “the only constant is change” has been a truism of life since at least the time of Heracleitus, circa 500 B.C.”⁵⁶¹

Change is a natural consequence of healthy growth, as Mark Barrett observes,

1. Healthy things grow.
2. Growing things change.
3. Changing things challenge us.
4. Challenge forces us to trust God.
5. Trust leads to obedience.
6. Obedience makes us healthy.
7. Healthy things grow.⁵⁶²

Change is a natural, positive reality in life. Elaine Dixon observes,

There are many words in our vocabulary which suggest change. A few of these are education, training, orientation, supervision, counseling, consulting and parenting. These terms imply that change will happen and they carry essentially positive connotations. Because of the positive connotations of these words these processes are seen as necessary and helpful.⁵⁶³

A person who learns, matures, creates, composes, advances, graduates, or achieves competence is typically seen as changing for the better.

⁵⁶¹ Peter Senge, *The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 14.

⁵⁶² Mark Barrett, as quoted in *CMA Management Monthly* (December 1999/January 2000), as cited in Steve Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church Workbook: A Dialogue, Assessment, and Planning Tool* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 99.

⁵⁶³ Elaine Dixon, *Say No, Say Yes to Change* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 23-24, as cited in Aubrey Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, 148.

Change is Natural for the Church

The church is an organism, the Body of Christ, rather than simply an organization.⁵⁶⁴ The church as a living organism will inevitably experience changes as the church grows and matures. Like any growing organism, there are life-sustaining and growth-enhancing factors required for healthy growth. Just as a plant needs water, sun, good soil with nutrients and room for roots to spread, there are growth factors in the Body of Christ that God uses to enable the church to grow “all by itself.”⁵⁶⁵ Like tending a garden, church leaders and parishioners can enhance the growth and vitality of the body of Christ by ensuring these growth factors are present and adequate. When all the necessary growth factors are adequately present, and any barriers to growth are sufficiently removed, the church will grow, bear good fruit, and reproduce.⁵⁶⁶ There is a threshold where all necessary quantitative factors are present and all obstacles cleared away, that releases a qualitative energy in a healthy, fruitful church that, like a hot air balloon, will take off with a synergy beyond all one could ask or imagine.⁵⁶⁷

The church of Jesus Christ grows and flourishes for a specific purpose. In the Gospel, believers are commissioned to proclaim a message of radical change.⁵⁶⁸ Repentance, reconciliation and discipleship involve radical

⁵⁶⁴ 1 Cor. 12:12-27, Rom. 12:4-8.

⁵⁶⁵ Mark 4:28; Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12-14.

⁵⁶⁶ “The true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but another tree; the true fruit of a small group is not a new Christian, but another group; the true fruit of a church is not a new group, but another church; the true fruit of a leader is not a follower, but a new leader; the true fruit of an evangelist is not a convert, but new evangelists.” Ibid, 68.

⁵⁶⁷ Gary L. McIntosh and R. Daniel Reeves, *Thriving Churches in the Twenty-First Century: 10 Life-Giving Systems for Vibrant Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006), 41.

⁵⁶⁸ Stanley Grenz, “A Theology for the Future,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (S 1985): 263.

transformation in individuals who are called by God to be leaven to then transform society.⁵⁶⁹ The Christian hope of the eschatological kingdom is a new order where God’s ways of righteousness, justice and authentic love offer a radical change from contemporary society’s status quo.⁵⁷⁰

Natural Barriers to Change

There are also limits to growth, or change, and predictable barriers to change.⁵⁷¹ These barriers are “natural counter-pressures to generating change...though they often appear as seemingly independent events, they are interconnected and interdependent.”⁵⁷² The “ecosystem” in which the church exists exerts counter-pressure on change initiatives in order to maintain homeostasis. Peter Senge notes:

The fundamental flaw in most innovators’ strategies is that they focus on their innovation, on what they are trying to do—rather than on understanding how the larger culture, structures, and norms will react to their efforts. Based on the experience of those who seem to be sustaining progress, we have come to the view that no progress is sustainable unless innovators learn to understand why the system is pushing back, and how their own attitudes and perceptions (as well as other forces) contribute to the ‘pushback.’ When they see this, they start to develop systematic strategies for sustaining profound change.⁵⁷³

Wise leaders are alert students of their environment and the effect their change initiatives have on the church ecosystem.

⁵⁶⁹ Mt. 13:33; 2 Cor. 3:18.

⁵⁷⁰ Grenz, “Theology”, 263.

⁵⁷¹ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 26.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

Societal Change

Society is changing at a phenomenal rate. Technological advances and rapid and portable communication across our increasingly global economy contribute to the accelerating rate of change of this era.⁵⁷⁴ These changes have far-reaching implications for every aspect of society, transforming life as we know it. The comprehensive magnitude of societal transformation is such that Peter Drucker says:

Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation. We cross a ‘divide.’ Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself—its worldview; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And the people born then cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born. We are currently living through just such a transformation.⁵⁷⁵

The magnitude of the ongoing rate of change is difficult for the average person to grasp. For those reluctant to recognize the phenomenal rate of change today, business consultant Tom Peters writes:

Revolution? The word is not too strong. And it’s not the same thing as change. Change? Change? Yes, we’ve almost all, finally, embraced the notion that ‘change is the only constant.’ Well, sorry. Forget change! The word is feeble. Keep saying ‘revolution.’ If it doesn’t roll easily off your tongue, then I suggest you have a perception problem—and, more to the point, a business or a career problem. What we do. What we make. How we work. Each is the subject of nothing less than a revolution.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Warner Books, 1982). “We are living in an era of accelerating change.” Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 165. A synopsis of recent trends impacting ministry decisions can be found in McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 24-33.

⁵⁷⁵ Peter F. Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: Harper, 1993), 1, as cited in *Ibid*, 12.

⁵⁷⁶ Tom Peters, *The Tom Peters Seminar: Crazy Times Call for Crazy Organizations* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 8, as cited in *Ibid*, 12.

American society, and the entire global village in which we live, are in such a state of flux that everyone is impacted by these changes, whether they wish to acknowledge this as so or not. Such upheaval in society impacts the church. Two leading church consultants warn, “We as church leaders and Christians ignore these changes to our own peril.”⁵⁷⁷

The Church in the Context of a Changing Society

Change in the church is not viewed unanimously as a good or necessary event. Since the church draws from twenty centuries of tradition, many rely on their church to be a sanctuary of permanence and stability in a rapidly-changing world.⁵⁷⁸ Joel Barker shows how pervasive the unsettling impact of change affects people in general:

We have been living in a time when fundamental rules, the basic ways we do things, have been altered dramatically. That is, what was right and appropriate in the early ‘60s, is, in many cases today, wrong and highly inappropriate. Or, conversely, what was impossible, crazy, or clearly out of line in the early ‘60s, is, in many cases today, so ordinary that we forget that it wasn’t always that way. These kinds of dramatic changes are extremely important because they have created in us a special sense of impermanence that generates tremendous discomfort.⁵⁷⁹

Fear of change pushes some into isolation, with the “nostalgic hope that tomorrow will be yesterday”⁵⁸⁰ The church, holding to Christ as the sure foundation, does

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁵⁷⁸ Craig A. Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 7.

⁵⁷⁹ Joel Barker, *Discovering the Future: The Business of Paradigms* (St. Paul, MN: ILI Press, 1989), 2-3, as cited in McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 13.

⁵⁸⁰ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 10, 141.

offer strength and stability in times of change.⁵⁸¹ However, limiting the church to a mere refuge sacrifices a ministry focus for a preservation mentality.⁵⁸² Church leaders are wise to help parishioners view change more objectively. As Craig Satterlee says:

In and of itself, change is neutral. Any change can be approached as either a threat or an opportunity, either a cause for celebration or a reason to despair. The issue confronting congregations and their leaders is not the changes themselves. The issue is the congregation's response to both the change and the transition it initiates.⁵⁸³

Change impacting the church is inevitable. The choice is not about change as much as how the church will respond to change.⁵⁸⁴ “Change is not only an opportunity for the church, it is also a test for the church. Change forces a continual evaluation of what is essential and what is not.”⁵⁸⁵

Since many churches shun making the necessary adjustments to maintain a viable Christian witness to a changing society, an understanding of motivational theory is needed to assist leaders effecting necessary change.

Theory of Motivation

Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow, in his classic *Motivation and Personality*, has organized basic human needs “into a hierarchy of relative prepotency.”⁵⁸⁶ Often

⁵⁸¹ Robert Kysar, *Stumbling in the Light: New Testament Images for a Changing Church* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 1999), 4.

⁵⁸² Ibid, 10, 131.

⁵⁸³ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 6.

⁵⁸⁴ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 11.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 144.

⁵⁸⁶ Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, Second ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1954, 1970), 38.

diagramed as a pyramid, one starts at the bottom with humanity's most basic needs. When a person's basic needs are addressed, one introduces motivational incentives at the level where one's need is conscious, or can be awakened. However, when a person is deprived of their most basic human needs, that need dominates their thinking. Nothing else matters as long as that most basic need is unmet.⁵⁸⁷ Maslow explains:

One main implication of this phrasing is that gratification becomes as important a concept as deprivation in motivation theory, for it releases the organism from the domination of a relatively more physiological need, permitting thereby the emergence of other more social goals.⁵⁸⁸

Starting at the base of Maslow's hierarchy, people are primarily motivated to meet physiological needs such as food, water, warmth, and sex.⁵⁸⁹ Maslow illustrates:

For our chronically and extremely hungry man, Utopia can be defined simply as a place where there is plenty of food...Anything else will be defined as unimportant...Such a man may fairly be said to live by bread alone.⁵⁹⁰

When those physiological needs are adequately addressed, one gives priority to the next level, which is one's need for safety. This includes security, stability, protection, freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos, as well as a need for structure, order, limits, and strength in the protector.⁵⁹¹ Safety or security needs can wholly dominate one's current and future values and outlook on life, if

⁵⁸⁷ "A want that is satisfied is no longer a want. The organism is dominated and its behavior organized only by unsatisfied needs." Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, 35-38.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid, 37.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid, 39.

one's state of deprivation is extreme or chronic enough. Parishioners with a history of safety issues may be especially intolerant of the disorder and chaotic intrusions that may persist in a church in transition. An obsessive-compulsive reaction to disorder may explain some parishioner's attachment to traditional practices that they can hold onto and practice to pacify their anxiety.⁵⁹² During transitions, if the leadership is perceived as less than adequate for the challenges the church faces, some parishioners' heightened anxiety amidst the disruption of previously orderly systems will be motivated to restore a sense of security to address this level of need. Nothing else matters to the individual, says Maslow, as longs as this security need dominates one's thinking. "Changes tend to threaten the security of the orderly and familiar ways we have known in the past."⁵⁹³ One must not underestimate how tenaciously individuals will resist changes that threaten their sense of security.

The next area of need to take center focus, once these first two are addressed, is one's need for love and belonging. Family and authentic relationships in the Christian community are all-important as one comes to terms with just where one belongs. Being heard and accepted satisfies social needs, and leads to 'ownership' of the initiative.⁵⁹⁴

Next one turns to esteem needs for self-respect and feeling competent. Esteem needs fall in two categories: personal experience of worth and

⁵⁹² Ibid, 42.

⁵⁹³ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 165.

⁵⁹⁴ Paul W. Lenz, Jr. "Motivation: Its Theory and Practice for Church Leaders." *Journal of Christian Education (US)* 2, no. 1 (1982): 25.

competence on the one hand, and the desire for recognition, attention, importance, appreciation or admiration in the eyes of others.⁵⁹⁵

The restlessness that persists when all these needs are satisfied is what Maslow calls the need for self-actualization. This is one's desire for self-fulfillment, "achieving one's full potential in the most creative, self-motivated way."⁵⁹⁶

Wise leaders will find appropriate ways to involve parishioners in the transition process and in the new beginning that draw from these higher needs according to Maslow's hierarchy. Involvement in responsibilities leads to "emotional involvement," deepening commitment and enhancing self-esteem needs.⁵⁹⁷ Training, a clear job description listing goals, skills and qualities required, responsibilities, relationships, resources and length of commitment also address self-esteem needs. Motivating leaders present the opportunity to the individual as a positive challenge, explaining why this person is especially suited for this opportunity. Based on ability, gifts and interests, parishioners may experience a sense of achievement (esteem need) through the successful completion of a task, by finding a solution to a problem, or by seeing the results of one's work.

Parishioners' may achieve a sense of recognition that comes with the feeling of personal accomplishment when a task is completed.⁵⁹⁸ Celebrating

⁵⁹⁵ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 45.

⁵⁹⁶ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 19.

⁵⁹⁷ Lenz, Jr. "Motivation: Its Theory and Practice", 25.

⁵⁹⁸ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 20.

accomplishments, even in simple ways, can be very motivating. Give credit to those whose performance helped make it happen.⁵⁹⁹ Steve Macchia urges leaders:

Don't wait until the end of the process to celebrate. Watch for milestones that can be highlighted and applauded all along the way. In the midst of your celebrations, savor the adventure and find joy in the change journey. This positive attitude toward change will help your team immeasurably.⁶⁰⁰

Some parishioners will maintain or increase motivation when entrusted with responsibility.⁶⁰¹ Responsibility may involve giving the parishioner control over a task or ministry. Some will be motivated when they are entrusted to perform their role without supervision. People generally live up to expectations. “Climates which focus on incompetence inspire incompetent performances, just as . . . climates which focus on self-competency inspire competent performances.”⁶⁰² Abraham Korman asserts, “the higher a worker’s perception of personal competence is, the more effective will be the performance.”⁶⁰³ Leaders, especially during times of transition, are wise to create environments for parishioners to experience self-confidence, which will more likely result in more competent performance. “Nothing succeeds like success. Nothing fails like failure.”⁶⁰⁴

⁵⁹⁹ Lenz, Jr. “Motivation: Its Theory and Practice”, 25.

⁶⁰⁰ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church Workbook*, 99-100.

⁶⁰¹ This is derived from the Two-Factor Theory of Frederick Herzberg (1966) as cited in Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 21.

⁶⁰² Ibid, 20.

⁶⁰³ Abraham Korman, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), as cited in Ibid, 20.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

Some self-actualizing parishioners are motivated by interesting work.⁶⁰⁵ Interesting work may call for creativity, offer variety over routine, or a challenge over repetitiveness. Managers must define clear parameters but then “allow freedom as much as possible. Self-actualizing people need to express their creativity.”⁶⁰⁶ Also, challenge these individuals with big ideas and visions. Encourage creative thinking. Motivation can be maintained and enhanced as leaders provide resources and support not otherwise available to individuals.⁶⁰⁷

Elements of Motivation

Motivation is more complex than simply identifying one stand-alone motivating factor. Lenz says, “motivation can be satisfactorily explained only by a combination of elements including instinct, need reduction, desire for stimulation, and unconscious influence.”⁶⁰⁸ Each of these elements of motivation is governed intrinsically.

Intrinsic Motivation

One does not motivate someone else, for “Human beings are self-motivating.”⁶⁰⁹ Intrinsic motivation means individuals have this inherent need to be self-motivated and self-directed.⁶¹⁰ Rather than “motivate” people, Lenz suggests thinking in terms of directing motivation. No one actually motivates

⁶⁰⁵ This is derived from the Two-Factor Theory of Frederick Herzberg (1966) as cited in Ibid, 21.

⁶⁰⁶ Lenz, Jr. “Motivation: Its Theory and Practice”, 25.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid, 26.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁰⁹ Dennis C. Kinlaw, “Preparation for Church Membership: A Motivational Model,” *Religious Education* 67, no. 3 (1982): 202.

⁶¹⁰ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 17.

someone else. Rather, one's words or actions simply arouse, encourage, or direct the internal drives of others.⁶¹¹ Antoine de Saint-Exupery has said, "If you want to build a ship, don't summon people to buy wood, prepare tools, distribute jobs, and organize the work, rather, teach people the yearning for the wide, boundless ocean."⁶¹²

The impact of intrinsic motivation is evidenced by the success of team ministry in churches today.⁶¹³ Intrinsic motivation utilizes more direct participation by parishioners. People support those initiatives they help to create.⁶¹⁴ In fact, the level of one's commitment is in direct proportion to the level of one's participation and investment in setting the objective.⁶¹⁵ Churches therefore can empower ministry teams to successfully follow-through by encouraging them to develop their vision and ministry strategy within the parameters of sound biblical principles and the church's overall goals.⁶¹⁶ People are intrinsically motivated to carry out plans they have personally helped to conceptualize.

Team participants require higher-level motivational characteristics. Hiam notes:

Characteristics like problem-solving, taking initiative, being enthusiastic, and being creative are associated with intrinsic motivation... Autonomy (or personal control over one's situation)

⁶¹¹ Lenz, Jr., "Motivation: Its Theory and Practice," 24.

⁶¹² Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), 26.

⁶¹³ McIntosh & Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 109-122.

⁶¹⁴ Drs. Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, as cited in Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 15.

⁶¹⁵ Kinlaw, "Preparation for Church Membership," 202

⁶¹⁶ McIntosh & Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 110.

is a very important driver of the level of intrinsic motivation... When people feel like they lack personal control, they lose initiative, and their intrinsic motivation evaporates.⁶¹⁷

Learned helplessness is a relatively new discovery in psychology that occurs when someone feels like they can't control the outcomes, leaving them with the sense that they are stuck and helpless to fix things.⁶¹⁸ Alexander Hiam notes that if one is not able to affect outcomes directly, one can slip into a frame of mind where one just doesn't care and stops trying to make a difference. One may even get depressed. One certainly will not be motivated.⁶¹⁹ Imposing change from the "top down," whether in fact or simply perceived that way, adversely affects intrinsic motivation, as Peter Senge describes:

Because these change programs are typically imposed from the top, many in the organization feel threatened or manipulated by them—even if they support in principle the intent or rationale behind the management change agenda. As organizational change pioneer Richard Beckhard once put it, "People do not resist change; people resist being changed."⁶²⁰

Team management integrates the goals of the organization and the needs of the people involved.⁶²¹ Team management is a practical way to move from a "top-down" compliance approach for affecting change, to eliciting intrinsic motivation from participants. Peter Senge notes, "Deep changes—in how people think, what they believe, how they see the world—are difficult, if not impossible,

⁶¹⁷ Alexander Hiam, *Motivational Management: Inspiring Your People for Maximum Performance* [electronic resource] (AMACOM, American Management Association, 2003), 141.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 14.

⁶²¹ Blake and Mouton, as cited in Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 13-15.

to achieve through compliance.”⁶²² In decision-making, leaders can increase parishioner’s intrinsic motivation by giving them choices instead of a single option.⁶²³ Meetings, Hiam adds, should provide opportunity for participants to explore ideas without being stifled by a rigid adherence to the agenda. Include parishioners in the planning process, and, once the plan is written, leave room for learning and improvement upon the initial ideas enhances intrinsic motivation.⁶²⁴ This form of “team management” requires the manager to act “as a coach, adviser, and consultant who communicates feelings and facts” to participants “in order to work out creative solutions to problems.”⁶²⁵

Open communication aids intrinsic motivation by keeping misinformation to a minimum.⁶²⁶ “Conflicts and disagreements...can raise stress levels and leave people feeling hurt and upset.” Without micromanaging conflict, leaders need to be alert to conflict situations and “take an interest in seeing them resolved well.”⁶²⁷ Likewise, negative talk, including destructive, exploitative, and devaluing conflict fragments the organization,⁶²⁸ contaminates attitudes, and dismantles motivation.⁶²⁹

⁶²² Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 13.

⁶²³ Hiam, *Motivational Management*, 142.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Blake and Mouton, as cited in Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 15.

⁶²⁶ Hiam, *Motivational Management*, 153.

⁶²⁷ Ibid, 154.

⁶²⁸ Donna J. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership: Working Through Resistance to Organizational Change* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 15.

⁶²⁹ Hiam, *Motivational Management*, 159.

Directing Motivation

Rather than speak of a lack of motivation, Lenz says, “A more accurate description...would indicate a misdirection of motivation. Motivation is a constant—the variable is direction.”⁶³⁰ Pastors have a responsibility to help people see the larger, Kingdom purpose for the recommended changes. People are motivated by a cause, like the Kingdom of God, rather than a task.⁶³¹

Motivating change in the church ultimately rests within each individual parishioner. The parishioner’s faith and commitment to Christ and the Great Commission are factors that make the issue of motivating change in an evangelical church qualitatively different than motivating change in a secular agency or church that does not hold a high view of Scripture. Effective motivation must address the values of the individuals being motivated.⁶³²

Persuasion

Aristotle identified three modes of persuasion achieved through the spoken word. One depends on the personal character of the speaker exuding credibility while speaking. The second requires putting the audience in a particular frame of mind, particularly by stirring the audience’s emotions. The third relies on the proof or apparent proof of the truth by means of a persuasive

⁶³⁰ Lenz, Jr., “Motivation: Its Theory and Practice,” 23-27.

⁶³¹ “Don’t ever take a job for the money or a title. . . . I would go for a cause anytime versus a job.” Colleen Barrett, President & COO, Southwest Airlines, as cited in John Baldoni, *Great Motivation Secrets of Great Leaders* (New York: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2005).

⁶³² Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 1.

argument.⁶³³ Ian McDonald explains how persuasion motivates people to do what is right by arousing one's affective sensitivity to the issue,

The rhetoric of suasion has also to do with motivation and affect, with arousing passionate concern for and sensitivity to the issues, and with leading the hearers into a realm of being in which they can both will and do what is right.⁶³⁴

Cognitive Dissonance

Change can produce cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is an internal conflict that, as Festinger writes:

Occurs when beliefs or assumptions are contradicted by new information. This conflict produces feelings of discomfort which the individual may attempt to assuage by actually reconciling the differences, by convincing himself or herself that they do not exist, or by generating various defense mechanisms...cognitive dissonance explains the common human tendency to screen out unpleasant data.⁶³⁵

Denial is a typical way people screen out unpleasant data. Minimizing is another defense tactic used to delay or avoid the prospect of change. When several individuals share a strong motivation to screen out compelling reasons for a proposed change, these persons reinforce their defense mechanisms of denial. Social support is particularly easy to find in the pursuit of dissonance reduction in

⁶³³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1941 ed., 1329-1330, as cited in Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, *Attitudes and Persuasion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches*, Reprint edition (Jackson, TN: Westview Press, 1996), 5-6.

⁶³⁴ J Ian H. McDonald, "Rhetorical Issue and Rhetorical Strategy in Luke 10.25-37 and Acts 10.1-11.18," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 59.

⁶³⁵ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 243.

mass settings.⁶³⁶ However, when the reality of change continues to be repeatedly evident, people begin to examine the situation. “It is quite difficult for people who are ordinarily responsive to reality to maintain beliefs which are clearly invalid.”⁶³⁷

Understand People’s Resistance to Change

A strategy for motivating change must address the emotions in the people affected because, “Change scares us.”⁶³⁸ Bridges suggests that “people’s resistance in a transition can be traced to fear, sense of loss, lack of understanding, or lack of ownership.”⁶³⁹ Woolever concurs, “Fear, uncertainty, and risk prevent congregations from going down the difficult path that no other congregation can or will travel.”⁶⁴⁰ Smith summarizes the personal motivation for resistance, “Change means risk, risk means uncertainty, uncertainty means failure, and failure means us.”⁶⁴¹

Guiding a congregation through a time of transition requires attentive listening and flexibility, as parishioners’ perceptions and reactions can change as the process proceeds. Leaders need to be alert to the impact the transition is

⁶³⁶ Ibid, 233-234.

⁶³⁷ Ibid, 243.

⁶³⁸ Douglas K. Smith, *Taking Charge of Change: 10 Principles for Managing People and Performance* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1996), 3.

⁶³⁹ William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, Second edition (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2003), 3, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 18.

⁶⁴⁰ Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 5.

⁶⁴¹ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 47.

having on parishioners' and leader's physical health and well-being.⁶⁴²

Transitions do not impact every participant uniformly.

Trust is important when introducing change. If parishioners perceive the one introducing change is motivated for some personal benefit rather than for the good of the church, "they will be wary, resistant, or go underground to retaliate later."⁶⁴³

Leaders introduce change knowing people's initial reaction may be less than enthusiastic. As John Locke observed, "New opinions are always suspected and usually opposed without any other reason but because they are not already common."⁶⁴⁴

Some parishioners may resist changes they perceive as disloyal to those founders or leaders who established what has become the status quo.⁶⁴⁵ Others resist, passively or actively, because they do not fully understand the need for the change or the potential benefits.⁶⁴⁶

Profound change requires a considerable time commitment from a network of committed people.⁶⁴⁷ Persons unable or unwilling to invest the

⁶⁴² Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 12.

⁶⁴³ Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford, *Influence Without Authority*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 23.

⁶⁴⁴ John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," as cited in *Christianity Today*, June 2006, 52.

⁶⁴⁵ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 116.

⁶⁴⁶ The sense of being "underwhelmed" includes failing to see how a nice idea translates into practical benefit. "Arrogance" refers to the assumption one already knows everything necessary. Also, "invisible symptoms," such as the lack of a learning environment within the organization, the lack of confidence that fresh ideas will be seriously acted upon, and insufficient networking within the organization. Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 418-419. "Many are not aware that the traditional church in America is in deep trouble." Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, 94.

⁶⁴⁷ "Being part of a network of committed people can take up a great deal of time, not just in meetings but in conversation, e-mail, and reading. Without enough time to spend on regular

necessary time may passively or actively resist the proposed changes. People also need to believe the case for change is compelling and the strategy for change clear and credible.⁶⁴⁸

Some members who have witnessed or experienced the intensity of transitioning may hesitate embarking on such a consuming enterprise again. Because many new ideas never materialize, at times at great personal as well as financial cost, some members resist change. Whether they realize it or not, these members may fear that one transition will lead to several more. Transitions rarely occur in isolation.⁶⁴⁹ When multiple transitions take place in a single congregation, transition fatigue, an often-overlooked factor, can lead to weariness and resistance to proposed changes.⁶⁵⁰ “Seasons of extreme effort and concentration need to be balanced with seasons of relaxation so the deep and holy urgency to move forward remains.”⁶⁵¹ Understandably, organizations, like people, “are less likely to take risks as they grow older.”⁶⁵²

A transition in the congregation can trigger personal transitions in the pastor and lay leaders as well as other individuals and groups in the church.⁶⁵³ Times of transition tend to jar individuals and organizations out of their traditional

practice of conversational or systems thinking skills, profound change cannot occur, even if there is strong interest.” Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 67.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, 160, 492ff.

⁶⁴⁹ “Generally one congregational transition brings on more transitions.” Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 12.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, 110.

⁶⁵² Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 116. This notion goes back to Aristotle, who said, “[Old men] have lived many years: They often have been taken in....The result is that they are sure about nothing and under-do everything. They ‘think’ but they never ‘know.’ ...They lack confidence in the future...for most things go wrong, or anyway worse than one expects.” As cited in Arthur Levine, *When Dreams and Heroes Died* (San Francisco/London: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1981), 26.

⁶⁵³ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 12.

routine to ask afresh questions of purpose. This can be an unsettling experience after years of gainful activity are now challenged in light of a fresh perspective of God's larger purpose.

Satterlee sees parishioners' resistance to transitions in order to "protect their world and the meaning and identity they receive through it."⁶⁵⁴ Parishioners resist transition for a second reason, that is, "to maintain the community, to avoid additional conflict, and to value all members of the congregation."⁶⁵⁵ Parishioners are hesitant to proceed until everyone is on board with the new vision. Satterlee offers this approach to those leading consensus-minded congregations:

Many communities of faith also go to great lengths both to honor every opinion and to avoid the conflict that may result from moving in any direction with less than complete consensus. To help the congregation embrace the transition, leaders must make it their priority to help people understand and 'own' problems brought on by the change as important, urgent, and solvable before attempting to initiate and implement solutions.⁶⁵⁶

The path from understanding and owning the problem to initiating and implementing a solution is long and difficult.⁶⁵⁷ The new realities congregations find themselves in throughout these days of unprecedented transition makes change essential to the congregation's faith, community, mission and life.⁶⁵⁸

Motivation and Commitment

Congregants are unique individuals. While two people may agree to resist a particular action, each may have a unique motivation for doing so. Likewise,

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid, 6-7.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁵⁷ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 322-334.

⁶⁵⁸ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 7.

two people may support a recommended change with different motivations, which serve different functions for each individual. If two people embrace a proposed change, their consensus may disintegrate over time when implementing the change requires greater sacrifices. One may embrace the proposed change for utilitarian reasons, such as a dutiful sense of supporting the leadership in hopes of future reciprocation. That utilitarian-motivated individual would likely be less committed than one supporting the change for value-expressive reasons that arise from deep faith convictions.⁶⁵⁹

Managing People in a Transition

Managing a transition is managing the people implementing the transition. Rosenbaum says to ask for and actively listen to participants' feelings⁶⁶⁰ "It is advisable to elicit questions, concerns, objections, and suggestions for implementing the change. It is always advisable to be sensitive to the self-esteem issues that typically surround change."⁶⁶¹ For those organizations where participants typically withhold honest thoughts on potentially conflictual issues, this step toward openness will be very threatening.⁶⁶² Peter Senge says:

Fear and anxiety ...are natural, even healthy responses to changes in the level of openness. Openness does not merely require the willingness to speak one's mind. It also requires the willingness to listen openly, to recognize the existence of different views—and, if need be, to change one's mind.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁹ Petty and Cacioppo, *Attitudes and Persuasion*, 8.

⁶⁶⁰ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 165-173.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid, 173.

⁶⁶² Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 241-242.

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 242.

Steve Macchia emphasizes churches build on their strengths while attending to weaknesses one at a time over time. “We move forward by putting the foot of affirmation ahead of the foot of criticism.”⁶⁶⁴

Guiding a Congregation through Transition

There is an art to the pastor’s responsibility to help the congregation face personally and collectively the call of God that requires a transition. The pastor from the pulpit must be careful not to impose a vision upon the congregation that inappropriately polarizes members. Rather, the preaching must raise the issues the congregation faces in light of God’s revealed Word and the applicable biblical principles in a way that invites engagement, dialogue, and active feedback.⁶⁶⁵

Monitoring Team

William Bridges recommends establishing a monitoring team “whose sole purpose is to monitor the transition.”⁶⁶⁶ The monitoring team is not involved in implementing change, but this cross-section of the congregation provides a constructive forum to receive congregational input, feedback, correct misinformation, counter rumors, and demonstrate the leadership’s commitment to the well-being of individual parishioners through the process of transition. The monitoring team provides sensitive eyes and ears to screen announcements and provide the pastor with feedback on how sermons are being understood, or

⁶⁶⁴ Steve Macchia, interview by writer, 10 January 2006, South Hamilton, MA.

⁶⁶⁵ The benefits and risks of preaching through transition and the difference between preaching around, about, at, and through the transition are covered in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 21-39.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

misunderstood. This monitoring team can partner with the pastor by providing insight that can serve to sharpen the focus of preaching.⁶⁶⁷

Resistance May Begin as Reluctance

Resistance to change is not the same as reluctance. However, resistance may begin as reluctance. Smith notes that 60-80 percent of the people in any organization are neither resistant nor ready. “They are anxious and reluctant about what lies ahead. And their reluctance might turn into hardened resistance if you continue to confuse the two phenomena.”⁶⁶⁸ Smith continues, “For every pure resister, one or more people are always ready to champion the change from the outset. If you enlist them effectively, these people will make extraordinary efforts to advance new visions and possibilities.”⁶⁶⁹

Wise leaders are attentive to their parishioners’ feelings and perspective throughout the change process. Smith asserts, “It is ignorance about the underlying nature of our reluctance and what to do about it, and not the reluctance itself, that kills change in people and organizations.”⁶⁷⁰ Parishioners’ natural reluctance to change can be leveraged to actually support the change when parishioners recognize the change is necessary.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, 33.

⁶⁶⁸ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 48.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, 47.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, 5.

Three Forms of Resistance

William Chris Hobgood says that resistance to change “appears in at least three forms: ‘intentionally antagonistic,’ ‘emotional and reactive,’ and ‘rational and probing.’”⁶⁷² An illustration of each of these types of resisters can be gleaned from the case study at Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA. Several intentionally antagonistic resisters insisted they knew their congregation better than this “humanistic” Natural Church Development survey. These antagonistic resisters discredited Natural Church Development as ‘science,’ as though something scientific could not apply to a spiritual entity such as the church. Their pious calls to have the church led by the Holy Spirit, prayer and God’s Word in Scripture left the impression that these were somehow absent if the church implemented Natural Church Development recommendations.

These antagonistic resisters bear some resemblance to what Ellis refers to as “never adopters.”⁶⁷³ Never adopters “sincerely believe they can recreate yesterday if only they can hang on to what is long enough.”⁶⁷⁴ This vocal minority, estimated at two percent of a given congregation, will attempt to split the church, drive away the pastor, make a statement with their dramatic departure, or persistently attempt to undermine the transition.⁶⁷⁵

Hobgood’s emotional and reactive resisters may have echoed similar sentiments as intentionally antagonistic resisters, but with a less absolutist

⁶⁷² William Chris Hobgood, *Welcoming Resistance* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2001), 16.

⁶⁷³ Joe S. Ellis, *The Church on Purpose: Keys to Effective Leadership* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1982), 103.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid, 104-105.

perspective. The emotional and reactive resisters parallel what Ellis calls late adopters.

Like never adopters, they are articulate and can be expected to speak out against anything new or innovative. In general, they are indistinguishable from the never adopters which initially gives the impression the never adopters are numerically larger than they are. The difference, however, is that in time late adopters go along with the new idea proposal. Though they may never acknowledge it verbally, they will fall in line with the direction of the majority or middle adopters. As the majority goes, so go the late adopters. Again, this is why the middle adopters are so important to the ultimate revitalization of the church.⁶⁷⁶

Middle adopters comprise 60-80 percent of a congregation.⁶⁷⁷ Middle adopters, like Hobgood's rational and probing resisters, approach new ideas with caution, skepticism, and probing questions. At Christ Church, a core of rational and probing resisters asked thoughtful questions in appropriate settings, providing opportunity to correct a number of misunderstandings. Most members said nothing, perhaps hoping if they ignored the results of the Natural Church Development survey, the leadership would forget about it. Middle adopters "will not act until they have seen all the evidence."⁶⁷⁸

Another 20 percent of a given congregation is comprised of early adopters, of which 2 percent are innovators. These are the influencers who will be instrumental in launching a transition and convincing the remainder of the congregation of the transition's value.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid, 105.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, 104.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid, 106.

Responding to Resistance

It is a mistake to ignore resistance. Markham notes, “Left unattended, conflict becomes one of the most powerful resistances to change.”⁶⁸⁰ Resistance usually does not go away, but simply goes underground to surface at an inopportune time.⁶⁸¹ Bridges asserts, “For every week of delay, you gain a month of bitterness and mistrust.”⁶⁸² Attempts to combat resistance in an overpowering way can push emotional and reactive resisters, or even rational and probing resistors, into the more destructive intentionally antagonistic mode.⁶⁸³ Markham recognizes resistance as evidence of a healthy organization:

Resistance in and of itself is neither good nor bad. It is an unconscious process of retarding or blocking the process of transformation. No group or individual can withstand unimpeded change. Resistance serves the purpose of allowing an organism to consolidate its gains as it internalizes changes it has undergone...In any living organism faced with the prospect of changing, resistance will surely be present.⁶⁸⁴

Hobgood recommends several responses to resistance: maintaining, reinforcing, adjusting, redefining, retooling, restructuring, and transforming.⁶⁸⁵ Maintaining involves staying the course with a decision for the good of the church, despite resistance, whether it is a new program or an established tradition. Reinforcing advances maintaining a step further by enlisting more people in the

⁶⁸⁰ Donna J. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership: Working Through Resistance to Organizational Change* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 14.

⁶⁸¹ Hobgood, *Welcoming Resistance*, 16.

⁶⁸² Bridges, *Managing Transition*, 32, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 74.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴ Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 24.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 27-37.

initiative, soliciting additional finances, prayer and attendance. Adjusting nominally alters the time, frequency or focus without altering the core emphasis. Redefining dares to bring into focus the new mission and its implications. Retooling, restructuring, and transforming call for more profound changes in procedures, organizational systems and values. Grenz says, “A transition period is both a time of rapid change and halting uncertainty.”⁶⁸⁶ Markham encourages provoking this uncertainty.⁶⁸⁷ The status-quo needs to be disturbed in order for people to explore creative alternatives in earnest. The challenge is make the tension of transition a period of creativity by keeping parishioners engaged in honest debate no matter how messy, uncomfortable or demanding. By resisting one’s base reactions of “fight or flight,” parishioners are able to “crack through staid patterns of thinking” as the synergy for the new vision takes shape.⁶⁸⁸

Overcoming Resistance

Smith, speaking of the corporate setting, bluntly concludes that pure resisters must be eliminated, either by transfer to other assignments or by termination. In the church, such “blessed subtractions” of pure resisters are more complicated. Some members will recognize the vision initiated by the transformation does not fit their vision for the church and will choose to leave rather than resist. Such losses may raise anxiety and resistance for other members, including those previously supportive of the transition. Leaders at all levels of the

⁶⁸⁶ Grenz, 258.

⁶⁸⁷ Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 52.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid, 15.

organization must be alert to changes people display and inquire sensitively.⁶⁸⁹ Such revelations may become apparent to others in the organization besides leaders. The culture of the entire community must be elevated above tactics of manipulation, be made aware of the dangers of triangulation and reminded of the importance of preserving confidentiality.⁶⁹⁰

Leaders at all levels in the church are challenged to accept:

The difficult responsibility of understanding rather than dismissing the attitudes of people with whom one must deal.... discovering practical ways of releasing the energy and creativity that now seem to be suppressed... People need to learn to be themselves in this process of transition to a new beginning.⁶⁹¹

Markham sees creative solutions waiting on the other side of healthy conflict.⁶⁹² David Augsburger says conflict is natural, neutral, normal, and at times even delightful!⁶⁹³ Squelching conflict “blocks the possibility of synergistic, highly creative solutions to the complex problems that face organizations these days.”⁶⁹⁴ The challenge for leaders in times of transition is not to resolve conflict, but to manage, even promote healthy conflict. Parishioners will grow spiritually as they engage the diversity in the Body of Christ in a safe, honoring environment. A valuable side-effect of the transition is when parishioners recognize the beneficial insights that come from those of different perspectives.

⁶⁸⁹ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 5.

⁶⁹⁰ Triangulation: “diverting conflict between two people by involving a third.” Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 31.

⁶⁹¹ Saul W. Gellerman, *Motivation and Productivity* (New York: American Management Association, 1963), 293, as cited in Lenz, Jr. “Motivation: Its Theory and Practice,” 24.

⁶⁹² Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 14.

⁶⁹³ David W. Augsburger, *Caring Enough To Confront: How to Understand and Express Your Deepest Feelings Toward Others*, Revised edition (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981), 11.

⁶⁹⁴ Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 14.

The leadership is wise to face the resistance, identify the modes of resistant behavior and explore as an organization the motives fueling the resistance.⁶⁹⁵ Leaders need to make clear the implications of not addressing the resistant behavior to motivate taking appropriate action to move beyond the resistance.⁶⁹⁶

Resisters and defectors need not be vilified, but utilized to strengthen the transition process.⁶⁹⁷ Leaders especially must guard against any trace of negative attribution directed to persistent resistors, as though their resistance is a consequence of defective character, motives, or intelligence.⁶⁹⁸ Exit interviews with departing members could help determine areas to address to minimize losses.⁶⁹⁹

An inordinate number of members leaving the church may be an indicator of several causes. One cause could be the change process is not adequately managed or the culture is not adequately supportive. Such a loss of membership may also indicate the transition plan did not integrate the strengths of the church appropriately.⁷⁰⁰ Ethically, leaders must be careful to integrate the strengths of the church in implementing the new vision. Simply adopting another church's

⁶⁹⁵ Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 15.

⁶⁹⁶ Negative feelings about the resister typically lead to avoiding the resistant person, leaving one to assume negative motives or character as the unchallenged reason for their resistance. This self-fulfilling prophecy can be avoided by counter-intuitively moving closer to resistant individuals to better understand their values, goals and ways to appeal to shared values. Cohen and Bradford, *Influence Without Authority*, 62-79.

⁶⁹⁷ Mary K. Sellon, *Redeveloping the Congregation: A How To For Lasting Change* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 2002), 84.

⁶⁹⁸ "The negative attribution doesn't have to be spoken out loud, but it gets communicated anyway." Cohen and Bradford, *Influence Without Authority*, 27.

⁶⁹⁹ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 156.

⁷⁰⁰ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 10.

program overlooks the unique needs and resources resident in one's congregation.

Woolever describes the risks inherent in discovering a congregation's unique call, and the value of such courageous leadership:

Many times congregational leaders ask what is working well for another congregation. They hope to copy or franchise successful methods rather than adapting them to their situation or creating their own strategies. Such inquiries reflect limited awareness of and coping with their congregation's uniqueness. Facing the reality of their one-of-a-kind mission requires will and soul. The perception of risk is accurate. As one set of writers observed, 'Nature places a simple constraint on those who leave the flock to go their own way. They get eaten!'⁷⁰¹ Congregational nature avoids failure, yet going in a distinctive way moves a congregation to greater strength.⁷⁰²

Negative Change

Some parishioners and church leaders may be closed to any proposed change due to inappropriate changes that have infiltrated the church in recent decades. The dramatic changes in contemporary culture have prompted some to change the Gospel message to appeal to the values and sensitivities of this generation. Process theism, revisionist theology and revisionist history abound.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰¹ David Bayles and Ted Orland, *Art and Fear* (Consortium Book Sales and Distributors, 2001), as cited in Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 5.

⁷⁰² Ibid, 5-6.

⁷⁰³ Process Theism: David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975, 1996) dismisses "Classical Christianity" as untenable in a paragraph before reinterpreting ecclesiology in terms of Process Theism; Revisionist Theology: "We have a technical term for people who do not change: dead. If Christ has not changed since the resurrection, then Christ is no longer alive." Troeger advocates a "new image of God" that is "not confined to the Bible and the past." Thomas H. Troeger, *Preaching While the Church is Under Reconstruction: The Visionary Role of Preachers in a Fragmented World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 100, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 17; Revisionist history: Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003); Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1979) and Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003).

The North American church has changed in recent decades for many reasons less edifying than sound biblical theology. When the church, motivated by temporal ambitions, loses sight of her biblical mission, eventually the consequences are evident, as Peter Drucker notes:

The decline of the liberal churches in America in the 1900s came as a result of their losing sight of the mission of the church given to them by Christ. ‘The mission of the church has something to do with Christ’s statement that ‘He came to seek and to save those who were lost’’⁷⁰⁴

McIntosh and Reeves note, “During the 1980’s and 1990’s, churches gradually adopted the practices of the corporate world. In far too many congregations excellent ministry practice was often valued more than godliness.”⁷⁰⁵

Seeker-sensitive churches have grown into mega-churches in recent decades. However, Rich Hurst is unimpressed, “Churches influenced by the seeker-church movement have just become big self-help places, sort of a Parks and Recreation Department for the middle class.”⁷⁰⁶ An over-reaching appeal to seekers that compromises sound biblical theology ultimately deviates from the Gospel message. Sally Morgenthaler notes, “That’s the difference between self-

⁷⁰⁴ Peter Drucker, “The Church in the 21st Century: New Tools for the New Paradigm,” Leadership Network address, opening General Session, Tyler, TX, 19 Aug. 1991, as cited in Randy Frazee, *The Comeback Congregation: New Life for a Troubled Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 60.

⁷⁰⁵ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 53.

⁷⁰⁶ Sally Morgenthaler and Robb Redman, “New Paradigms for Worship and Ministry with Single Adults,” *Worship Leader* (May/June 1999): 32, as cited in Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 12.

help and transformation. It is a whole different worldview if you believe in [human] depravity.”⁷⁰⁷ Rich Hurst adds:

I don’t think they have much of a future; they’ll wind up being tourist attractions or community colleges because they haven’t learned how to reach the next generation. The idea of seeker worship hasn’t been the answer to what ails Christianity in America.⁷⁰⁸

Re-introducing biblical theology into these churches could be the next domestic mission field, lest these people eventually leave their seeker churches, concluding Christianity itself lacks substance.

Changeless Truth

Peter Senge notes that organizations with a strong sense of identity, who know who they are beyond what they do, base their identity on their core values.⁷⁰⁹ This stable foundation actually makes the organization more flexible, since once people know who they are and what their core purpose is, they can network creatively from that foundation.

This writer maintains that the Gospel is a consistent, unchanging message. Likewise, despite ongoing change in the world, the Great Commission remains in effect.⁷¹⁰ Finding effective ways to make disciples in this generation is an ongoing challenge for the church of Jesus Christ.⁷¹¹ Pastors and leaders in today’s churches need to learn and master the practical task of implementing necessary

⁷⁰⁷Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 333-334.

⁷¹⁰Mt. 28:18-20.

⁷¹¹McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 15.

changes consistent with biblical principles to keep the church viable, faithful, and relevant in this ever-changing world.

New Ways to Convey the Old Story

Christians are commissioned to share the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ with an ever-changing culture. While society's values and mores vary, Christians are challenged to find fresh ways to invite a new generation to connect with God's eternal truth without compromising biblical core values.⁷¹² Some churches in changing neighborhoods persistently maintain the programming of an earlier generation that fails to connect with their current demographic. Declining churches or those that fail to present the Gospel effectively to the changing demographics around them face a question of faithfulness to Christ's Great Commission. A church that continues to offer the same programming decade after decade to an ever-dwindling congregation needs help to discern how to be more effective, and thus more faithful to Christ's Great Commission. McIntosh and Reeves note:

Although the transforming power of the biblical message and the urgency of Christ's mandate to make disciples does not change, the situations in which they are proclaimed and the ways they are articulated, communicated, taught, and acted upon may change and vary. This thought is not new. Paul declared that he wanted to be all things to all people so that he could reach some 1 Cor. 9:19-23).⁷¹³

⁷¹² Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 141.

⁷¹³ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 15.

The challenge before the church is to theologically reflect and adapt its presentation of the unchanging Gospel to connect faithfully with a new generation. Stan Grenz says:

Theology is the self-awareness or self-understanding of the church. As such, theology assists the church in reflecting on itself, its message and its world, in order that the gospel might be proclaimed with power in each new context...A theology that is truly biblical...does not gather isolated texts to substantiate cherished views. Rather, it attempts to appropriate the central thrust of the biblical witness, the reconciliation of humanity, in order to speak to the needs of the contemporary world.⁷¹⁴

Every church is strongest in what it does best.⁷¹⁵ Many churches become isolated from the current generation by simply repeating what they know best, which presumably was effective at one time. Many churches are ill prepared to adapt to changing demographics and to the sensitivities of a new generation. “People tend to place a higher value on stability than on innovation.”⁷¹⁶ The temptation to maintain the familiar at the expense of the church’s purpose, as expressed in the Great Commission, leads to declining church health and diminished effectiveness. McIntosh and Reeves, with their considerable church consulting experience, recognize:

The desperate need of this hour for congregations of all sizes and shapes is for someone to come alongside leadership teams and

⁷¹⁴ Grenz, 261-262.

⁷¹⁵ John Steinbeck echoes this point, saying, “When a hypothesis is deeply accepted it becomes a growth which only a kind of surgery can amputate.” He says even after the so-called ‘facts’ that created the beliefs are shown to be inaccurate, the beliefs may persist. And the practices stemming from these same beliefs have a life of their own. Too often the practices continue even when no one remembers the original beliefs.” Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 14.

⁷¹⁶ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 116.

show them how to become an authentic missional community and how to reproduce the fundamentals of ministry in others.⁷¹⁷

Faithful Change in the Church

Problematic changes can occur as one diligently endeavors to maintain the status quo. Church leadership is responsible to ensure whatever changes, whether deliberate or passively allowed to occur in the church, be faithful to God's revealed Word in Scripture. For example, a deliberate choice to *not* change, but continue the same programming as last year, may in fact be an unfaithful *change* if this once effective program now causes the congregation to isolate themselves further from those the church is called to reach for Christ.⁷¹⁸ The church must be astute to societal trends in order to effectively communicate the gospel message.⁷¹⁹ The church must also be biblically prudent in order to avoid chasing worldly fads.

Renewing is the ongoing practice of cutting edge organizations to maintain viability and become leaders in their class.⁷²⁰ “Renewing organizations accept the inevitability of change.”⁷²¹ Renewing churches maintain their focus on Christ’s Great Commission for their direction and encourage innovative solutions

⁷¹⁷ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 129.

⁷¹⁸ “If...the church is not aware of what’s happening in the lives and contexts of those it is called to reach with the gospel, it might find itself becoming unfaithful to Christ’s Great Commission.” Ibid, 24

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, 24-34.

⁷²⁰ Robert H. Waterman, *The Renewal Factor: How the Best Get and Keep the Competitive Edge*, as cited in Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 136; “Our behavior is driven by a fundamental core belief: The desire, and the ability of an organization to continuously learn from any source—and to rapidly convert this learning into action—is its ultimate competitive advantage.” Jack Welch, “Letter to Shareholders,” General Electric Annual Report (Stamford, CT, 1996), as cited in Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 22.

⁷²¹ Robert H. Waterman, *The Renewal Factor: How the Best Get and Keep the Competitive Edge*, as cited in Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 136.

to the challenges posed by the changes within the larger church and society within the parameters of sound biblical principles. Leith Anderson writes:

In a healthy church or para-church system, the structure processes and adapts to the feedback from the members. Change is highly valued, and stability comes from the positive values gained rather than from negative values feared. Healthy systems are inclusive rather than exclusive, accepting newcomers and assimilating them into the system. Every system needs renewal. Those that are sick need to be healed. Those that are healthy will stay that way only through ongoing renewal.⁷²²

Peter Senge prefers the term “profound change” to describe the changes in the culture and core values of the organization and its participants needed to sustain, not only viable practical changes long term, but to sustain a culture in the organization that is flexible enough to continue to faithfully adapt to ongoing change. He writes,

Organizational change that combines inner shifts in people’s values, aspirations, and behaviors with ‘outer’ shifts in processes, strategies, practices, and systems. The word ‘profound’ stems from the Latin *fundus*, a base or foundation. It means, literally, ‘moving toward the fundamental.’ In profound change there is learning. The organization doesn’t just do something new; it builds its capacity for doing things in a new way—indeed, it builds capacity for ongoing change. This emphasis on inner and outer changes gets to the heart of the issues that large industrial-age institutions are wrestling with today. It is not enough to change strategies, structures, and systems, unless the thinking that produced those strategies, structures and systems also changes.⁷²³

Maintaining a Dynamic Relationship with the Living God

Many congregations have yet to discover that the issue is not about change as much as maintaining a dynamic relationship with the Living God. The church

⁷²² Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 122.

⁷²³ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 15.

is not simply an organization but a living organism, the Body of Christ.⁷²⁴

Relating to God involves a dynamic relationship that includes prayer, Scripture study and discerning the will of God for a given situation.⁷²⁵ Assuming a given change is consistent with God's Word, the leadership then focuses upon aiding the congregation in carrying the transition all the way through to its intended purpose.

Exposure to Biblical Theology as Change

Presenting biblical theology itself may constitute a change for some parishioners who hold emotional convictions to articles of faith lacking biblical merit. Even in conservative, Evangelical churches, some parishioners may hold firm emotional convictions that lack biblical support.⁷²⁶ McGregor says, "It is rare for deep-rooted emotional convictions to be abandoned in favor of conflicting academic theory."⁷²⁷ Biblical theology is not just any academic theory. However, some people may dismiss sound biblical theology as merely the pastor's academic

⁷²⁴ Eph. 1:22-23; 4:14-16; 5:23; Col. 1:18; see also John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.6.9, 1110. See also Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th Revised and Enlarged Edition, Tenth printing (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 593.

⁷²⁵ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 61-85.

⁷²⁶ This was true in ancient Israel. King Amaziah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord," yet the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at the high places (2 Ki. 14:1-4.) This was also true for King Azariah (2 Ki. 15:1-4). This also occurred in Judah under King Jehoshaphat (1 Ki. 22:41-44), King Joash (2 Ki. 12:1-3) and King Jotham (2 Ki. 15:32-35).

⁷²⁷ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1960), 15-16. John Steinbeck echoes this point, saying, "'When a hypothesis is deeply accepted it becomes a growth which only a kind of surgery can amputate.' He says even after the so-called 'facts' that created the beliefs are shown to be inaccurate, the beliefs may persist. And the practices stemming from these same beliefs have a life of their own. Too often the practices continue even when no one remembers the original beliefs." John Steinbeck, *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995; first published by Viking Press, 1951), 148, as cited in Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 13.

theory in order to hold onto their personal assumptions, regardless how compelling the biblical evidence to the contrary. Festinger, et. al. note that:

A man with a conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point.⁷²⁸

This poses a challenge for pastors who must address an aspect of transition requiring the presentation of biblical theology that is at odds with the emotional convictions of some parishioners. Sadly, some may never accept biblical theology regardless how accurate and compelling the presentation of biblical evidence.

Woolever speaks of emotional convictions lacking biblical merit as “myths,”

Myths are tempting assumptions about congregational life. Just as cheese lures a mouse, myths lure us to beliefs we want to be true. Believing myths is its own reward. Myths allow us to avoid change and permit us to use the same old methods to get the same old results. Myths immobilize and trap us in dead ends, blocking us from fully living out the answer to our most important question: What is God calling us to be and do as a congregation?⁷²⁹

Change That Endures

Motivating change that endures is a long-term enterprise that poses many challenges throughout the process. Peter Senge notes, “examples of successful, sustained transformation are few.”⁷³⁰ Business consultants Hammer and Champy, referring to the change process as reengineering, note an alarming failure rate,

⁷²⁸ When presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that one’s belief is wrong, the individual frequently responds undaunted, more deeply convinced of the truth of their beliefs than ever before. Often, the outcome finds the individual more motivated to convert others to this errant view. The futility of attempting to change a strong conviction in which an individual is personally invested is documented in Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 3.

⁷²⁹ Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 5.

⁷³⁰ Two-thirds to 70 percent of business reengineering efforts fail to produce desired results. More than half do not endure past the initial phases. Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 5-6, 11.

“Most organizations that undertake a reengineering effort do not achieve the dramatic results they intended.”⁷³¹ Churches face similar challenges. McIntosh and Reeves observe, “Most congregations never get beyond diagnosis.”⁷³² Agreeing to change and implementing enduring change are two different acts. Church consultant Craig Satterlee offers this strategy:

Given people’s ability to forget and deny difficult realities, we cannot trust a single experience either to bring permanent change or to sustain a change that has begun. Leading a congregation through transition requires patience, repetition, and sustained effort. Throughout the transition, the congregation needs to be reminded of God’s presence in the transition, the changes the transition brings, the promise of resurrection, and the new identity and mission that may result.⁷³³

Studies show that repetition enhances persuasion.⁷³⁴ A commitment and plan to see the transition process through to completion can make the difference between the introduction of proposed changes leading to an enduring enhancement of the church’s mission, or simply an interlude of heightened activity.

“Considerably more difficult than diagnosis is knowing how to change” specific patterns entrenched in the church’s practice.⁷³⁵ Even the most faithful vision will languish unless and until leaders and influencers at every level in the church and its subgroups guide parishioners through a period of orientation to equip them to understand the need for change and develop the attitudes and skills

⁷³¹ “Studies consistently report that no more than a fifth to a third of the reengineering, total quality, core competencies, downsizing, learning organizations, strategies, and other significant new programs monitored achieve their performance aspirations.” Michael Hammer and James Champy, *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), as cited in Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 1.

⁷³² McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 129.

⁷³³ Satterlee, When God Speaks Through Change, 30.

⁷³⁴ Petty and Wegener, “Attitude Change”, 365.

⁷³⁵ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 129.

necessary to implement the new vision.⁷³⁶ Motivating others to implement change is necessary since “Few people can get anything of significance done alone.”⁷³⁷

Enduring attitude change is rare.⁷³⁸ However, enduring attitude change is most likely to occur when conditions foster participants’ motivation and “ability to engage in issue-relevant cognitive activity at the time of message exposure.”⁷³⁹ This could include participation in the process of implementing change in ways that motivate specific parishioners. Also, small group discussion if not actual task force participation are effective orientation strategies. Small group and task force discussions need to incorporate other particulars, including parishioners’ self-generation of arguments for proposed changes, autobiographical instances related to the change, use of interesting and involving communication topics, providing increased time to think about a message, increasing message repetition, reducing distraction, and leading recipients to believe that they might have to explain or justify their attitudes to other people all serve to increase persistence of one’s attitude change.⁷⁴⁰

Assaults on parishioner’s chosen position are best resisted when parishioners are provided opportunities to recall autobiographical incidents relevant to their position.⁷⁴¹ Leaders can also equip them with relevant information and a supportive defense of their position. Having the parishioners generate their own defense is likewise conducive to the endurance of the new

⁷³⁶ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 5.

⁷³⁷ Cohen and Bradford, *Influence Without Authority*, 5.

⁷³⁸ Petty and Wegener, “Attitude Change”, 367.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid, 368.

attitude. Exposing parishioners to some arguments that may arise opposed to their position in a safe preparatory session inoculates or strengthens their attitude when they later face genuine resistance.

Equipping Leaders for Needed Change

Many clergy need to learn the skills necessary to successfully lead their church all the way through a transition.⁷⁴² Transforming leadership requires such skills as casting vision, maintaining trust, and empowering others to learn, perform and lead. Transforming leadership, according to James MacGregor Burns, integrates one's values and purposes to bring necessary change to one's social milieu.⁷⁴³ The leaders must cast vision using symbols that effectively capture members' deepest values and desires.⁷⁴⁴ Generating a burning desire throughout the congregation for the new vision can motivate participants through the process of change. "Trust is the lubrication that helps relationships and organizations work smoothly."⁷⁴⁵ Empowering the members is essential for the vision to become reality, as Leighton Ford writes:

The transformational leader motivates us to do more than we expected to do, by raising our awareness of different values, by getting us to transcend our self-interests for the cause and by expanding our portfolio of needs and wants.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² "Pastors are ill-equipped by seminaries: Ministers are trained to preach, teach, and counsel and then are asked to run a [church] business." George Barna, as cited in Tom Winfield, "Retailers Needed to Rescue Hurting Church," *Christian Retailing*, 15 September 1989, as cited in Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 159.

⁷⁴³ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 141-142.

⁷⁴⁴ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values and Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 21-22.

⁷⁴⁵ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), as cited in Ibid, 22.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

Peter Senge dispels the myth of the “hero-leader” in favor of “building institutions that, by their very nature, continually adapt and reinvent themselves, with leadership coming from many people in many places, not just from the top.”⁷⁴⁷

Mentoring relationships provide the necessary components to enhance people’s capacity through actual ministry or life experiences. The key to learning is facilitating “enhanced capacity for effective action in settings that matter to the learner.”⁷⁴⁸ The word “learning” literally means “to enhance capacity through experience gained by following a track or discipline.” Peter Senge asserts that “Learning always occurs over time and in ‘real life’ contexts, not in classrooms or training sessions.”⁷⁴⁹

Equipping Leaders at all Levels

Parishioners likewise need training in this area of transformation. The church overall has shown itself weak in implementing progressive change and in supporting those who expend themselves sacrificially to implement change. Barna notes, “There’s a lack of capable lay leaders to push the church forward. ..those who serve the church leave because they do not get the support they need.”⁷⁵⁰

In addition to necessary training and careful implementation, churches must have faith to follow through however imperfectly prepared they perceive

⁷⁴⁷ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 11.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid, 24.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid, 24.

⁷⁵⁰ George Barna, as cited in Tom Winfield, “Retailers Needed to Rescue Hurting Church,” *Christian Retailing*, 15 September 1989, as cited in Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 159.

themselves to be. “Excellence does not require perfection.”⁷⁵¹ In times of transition, one faces situations never before encountered. Moments of uncertainty, or when one’s confidence wanes, means one “must trust God to be faithful and to equip them and the congregation with what is needed.”⁷⁵²

It is imperative to provide parishioners meaningful involvement in implementing the new way initiated by the change. When people are involved in the new beginning in meaningful ways they personally experience the value of the changes amidst the upheaval of the transition period. Mission focused teams “provide the optimum context for generating spiritual energy because they ignite creative sparks between individuals—including the pastor—who were previously operating in isolation.”⁷⁵³ Groups or teams living out the new beginning position themselves to experience the harmony and synergy necessary to maintain momentum to see the transition through to completion. “Nothing does more for a person’s understanding and desire than the experience of change itself.”⁷⁵⁴

Three Phases in the Transition Process

William Bridges has identified three phases in the process of transition that mark the internal adjustments people make as they engage the realities of

⁷⁵¹ Israel Galindo, “The Myth of Competence,” in *Congregations* (Alban Institute, Winter 2003), 17, as cited in Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 14.

⁷⁵² Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 45.

⁷⁵³ Thomas G. Bandy, *Road Runner: The Body in Motion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 33-37, as cited in McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 55.

⁷⁵⁴ “No organization has ever gained traction against both performance and broad-based behavior change without a reinforcing set of initiatives that move simultaneously from the top down, the bottom up, and across pre-existing organizational boundaries. Moreover, no organization has gained traction without a set of initiatives that permit real people—individually and in teams at all levels—to contribute to the purpose of the whole organization and reap both inspiration and reward from doing so. Such harmony and reinforcement happen only if you consciously seek to achieve them as a key part of starting, stopping, or modifying programs or initiatives.” Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 42, 60.

change.⁷⁵⁵ Effective leaders can better manage people through the process of transition by being aware of these dynamics. In this study, these three phases will be referred to as end, liminal phase, and new beginning. These three phases are not purely sequential, but describe three distinct cords that are braided or woven into the change process.⁷⁵⁶

End

Transition marks the end of one thing to make way for what is to come. Even when the change is welcome, people deal with feelings of loss as they let go of what was familiar and at least some aspect of their identity.⁷⁵⁷ Some feelings of ambivalence may be evident as people face the reality of this loss. Others may actually resist or undermine the transition due to their sense of loss or feelings of emptiness. Those in denial about the root of their resistance further complicate the leader's task of managing the transition.

Defensive reactions are often evident when people resist change.⁷⁵⁸ These defensive reactions include withdrawal and rationalizing why the change will never work. The presence of emotional or irrational objections indicates the change triggers issues within the individual. “Typically it is not the change itself which causes the resistance but the meaning of the change for the people

⁷⁵⁵ Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 3, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 7.

⁷⁵⁶ “Leaders of congregational transition make clear that Bridges’s model is helpful for understanding congregational transitions when the three parts—Ending, Neutral Zone, and New Beginning—are understood not as phases, but as threads or strands woven into the tapestry of the congregation’s life.” Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid, 8.

⁷⁵⁸ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 165.

involved.”⁷⁵⁹ Heifetz and Linsky observe, “Because adaptive change forces people to question and perhaps redefine aspects of their identity, it also challenges their sense of competence. Loss, disloyalty, and feeling incompetent: That’s a lot to ask. No wonder people resist.”⁷⁶⁰

Liminal Phase

The Liminal Phase, from the Latin *limen*, or threshold, marks “an in-between time when the old is gone but the new has not fully arrived.”⁷⁶¹ This interim transitional phase, its roles, structures and procedures, is unique from what preceded and the new beginning yet to be realized. This liminal phase can last for months or even years. It may help some to think of this liminal phase as a period where the church’s new beginning is gestating in the womb. Others may relate to parallels with Israel’s journey through the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.⁷⁶² Satterlee writes:

The liminal phase of transition is a time of reorientation and redirection. The deconstruction and reconstruction of established ways of doing and being can renew motivation and give people space to take new initiatives that result in inspired words and actions. Questions can lead to breakthrough answers. Chaos is more hospitable to new ideas than are standardized methods and routines.⁷⁶³

One may reasonably anticipate the vacillation of emotions, evident in the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings, in congregations experiencing this

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid, 165.

⁷⁶⁰ Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard School of Business Press, 2002), 30, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 89.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid, 8.

⁷⁶² Ex. 16:1ff.

⁷⁶³ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 8-9.

phase of transition today. Israel grumbled or threatened to return to Egypt when the necessary sacrifices made them uncomfortable. This period of transition raises people's anxiety and lowers their motivation, as established procedures and expectations no longer apply. Parishioners may become less involved in worship or other church activity during this liminal phase. Neighboring churches may look more appealing. Past conflicts may resurface and polarize as the continued unsettledness of church life weighs heavy on members.

Human instinct insists on hurrying through this liminal phase to a more settled state. Church leaders must provide enough order to encourage innovation, promote experimentation, seek creative new solutions to old problems and embrace failures as valuable.⁷⁶⁴ “Congregations often try too quickly to ‘get back to normal’ when in reality there is no ‘normal’ to get back to. Resisting people’s desire for certainty and closure is continuous.”⁷⁶⁵

New Beginning

Rather than the congregation having finally “arrived,” this phase is more aptly titled, “New Beginning.” Parishioners are energized around their new sense of purpose and direction, as fresh attitudes and values help to establish a new identity.⁷⁶⁶ Parishioners’ excitement is tempered by their ambivalence of desire and fear as old anxieties surface in the face of actually stepping into this new way, with a very real risk of failure, and with turning back no longer possible.⁷⁶⁷ This

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid, 9.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid, 9.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid, 9-10.

ambivalence “has the potential to stall or derail the new beginning.”⁷⁶⁸ Also, some prefer “the spontaneity and chaos of the liminal phase,” and may resist entering a new beginning.⁷⁶⁹ All this to say new beginnings are neither automatic nor assured.

Failure to transition all the way through to the desired new beginning can be disillusioning, as both pastor and congregation second-guess the process long afterward. A carefully planned, step-by-step strategy is necessary to implement the new reality. One’s effectiveness in enlisting thorough commitment from everyone to see the transition process through to completion can make the difference between the introduction of proposed changes leading to an enduring enhancement of the church’s mission or simply an interlude of heightened activity.

Satterlee offers three essentials necessary for the new beginning to take hold.⁷⁷⁰ First, clearly explain the purpose in specific terms that the congregation finds compelling. This purpose must draw from specific abilities, resources and vision residing in the congregation.⁷⁷¹ Second, provide an image that captures the emotions as well as the experience of the new beginning. This image needs to be powerful enough to elicit an emotional investment⁷⁷² from parishioners that

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid, 10.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² The audience must be stirred emotionally in order to be persuaded. This is the second of three means of persuasion identified in Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1941 ed., 1329-1330, as cited in Petty and Cacioppo, *Attitudes and Persuasion*, 5-6.

moves them beyond themselves and compels them to follow through.⁷⁷³ Satterlee explains the layers of images that need to be recast to transform a congregation with a new, shared vision:

Fred Craddock argues that for the creation of a new identity and new behavior, images must be replaced, and this can be done only gradually, by other images. Even before new images are established in people's minds, they change identity and behavior by challenging established images that are in reality inadequate, inaccurate, or incomplete. In addition to addressing people individually, a picture of a new beginning has the power to create a community with a shared vision.⁷⁷⁴

Third, provide people active roles so as many members as possible can participate in both the transition process and in the new beginning. "Giving people something to do reassures them that they continue to be important, that they have a place in the new beginning, and that they will not be forgotten, left behind or excluded."⁷⁷⁵ It is especially important to involve those who will lose something significant in either the transition or in the new beginning. The more firsthand exposure to the need for the change empowers the congregation and its leaders to be allies rather than adversaries, helping "everyone to become invested in the success of the new beginning."⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷³ "Our emotions, in turn, derive from complex motivations ranging across basic security, belongingness, self-respect, and meaning." Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 57.

⁷⁷⁴ Fred Craddock, *Preaching*, 201, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 10.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

Managing Transition According to the Individual's Wheel of Change

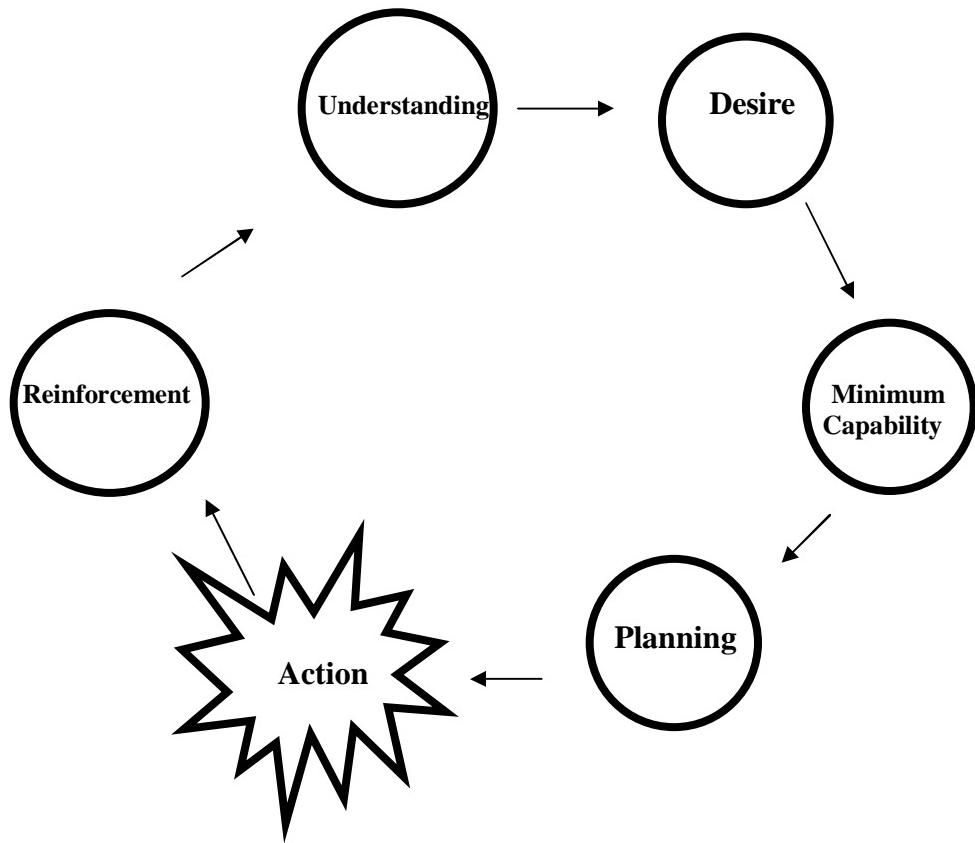
William Bridges observed three-phases to the transition process. Douglas K. Smith devised, “The Individual’s Wheel of Change.”⁷⁷⁷ Like Bridges’ three phases, Smith’s six-point wheel is more dynamic than a series of steps. When leaders are managing people through the process of incorporating change, asking diagnostic questions pertaining to each point on the wheel can facilitate discovering what each person involved can do to move forward.

Understanding

Rosenbaum has found that it is important to establish the need for the change before announcing the change itself.⁷⁷⁸ Participants require clear explanations as to why the change is essential. Explain the details of the change

⁷⁷⁷ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 58.

⁷⁷⁸ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 165-173.



The Individual's Wheel of Change.⁷⁷⁹

and discuss how the change might affect the participants.⁷⁸⁰ Background information helps participants see the situation and the benefits a proposed change affords. The more information people have about a change, the less the resistance.⁷⁸¹

A compelling rationale for making a change is essential to move from talk about change to actually implementing change.⁷⁸² More than information, Smith notes participants must understand how their role in the transition is essential in

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid, 58.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ "What Are We Doing This For?" Seven questions for planning the transformation focus is in Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 166-167.

⁷⁸² Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 6.

order to achieve the desired outcome. “Ensure each person always knows why his or her performance and change matters to the purpose and results of the organization.”⁷⁸³

People also need the help and support required to learn all that is necessary to implement the change. Peter Senge explains that foundational to this is a corporate atmosphere of trust and the freedom to ask for help. The “I can do it myself” mentality, that sees asking for help as a sign of incompetence, creates isolation and blindness.⁷⁸⁴ Even when help is readily available, people are often unaware of their need for help. People “‘don’t know what they don’t know’ until it is too late to do anything about it.”⁷⁸⁵ Strategies for pro-actively providing truly accessible help are essential.⁷⁸⁶

Those managing people through transition can use a diagnostic question such as, “Does the person understand the need for the change and how their cooperation impacts the whole as well as their own purpose?”⁷⁸⁷ Such a question can elicit feedback so the manager can clearly explain why a change is essential, or the need to focus on another point on the wheel of change.

Desire

People can agree a change is needed without thinking about the situation any further, much less committing to implementing recommended changes.

⁷⁸³ Ibid, 38.

⁷⁸⁴ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 103-106.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid, 104.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid, 104-107.

⁷⁸⁷ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 62-63.

People need to feel emotionally compelled to take action.⁷⁸⁸

Our emotions, in turn, derive from complex motivations ranging across basic security, belongingness, self-respect, and meaning, which explains why threatening, ‘we must do this or else’ circumstances cause more adults to change faster than do mere opportunities for self-improvement. Indeed, because of the power of emotions and motivations, individuals who come to desire change even before they fully understand it often move through the period of change more effectively than those who achieve understanding before desire.⁷⁸⁹

Those managing people through transition targeting this point on the change wheel can use one or more of these diagnostic questions:

Is the person emotionally invested in the change? Does the person feel in his or her heart that learning the new skills, behaviors and working relationships is essential? Does the person have a compelling sense of the performance consequences, both to him- or herself and the organization, of success or failure?⁷⁹⁰

Effective leaders are alert to the emotions and emotional investment of those involved in implementing change.

Minimum Capabilities

Participants need to have the minimum capabilities to learn the new skill or behavior necessary to implement the change. Participants probably will not know all they need to know to operate according to the new beginning. The question here is whether or not they are capable of learning what they need to do. At this point managers must discern if people are stalled because they *cannot* do

⁷⁸⁸ “People usually develop a rational, intellectual understanding of the need for change more quickly than the emotional desire to make it happen.” Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 57.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 63.

this or if the real issue is they *will not* do this.⁷⁹¹ The basic diagnostic question to ask is, “Does the person have the minimum capabilities required to make the change?”⁷⁹²

Planning

Planning is important, but planning can be overdone at the expense of progressing through the transition process. There is the danger of planning to the point of avoiding action. Some use planning as a ploy to delay change indefinitely.⁷⁹³ “The best plans lead to action in a performance context.”⁷⁹⁴

Managers at this point in the wheel of change could use the following diagnostic tools. “Does the person have a plan of action in place?”⁷⁹⁵ Ask for ideas on how the change can best be accomplished.⁷⁹⁶ Talk to people who will carry out the proposed changes, rather than simply the decision makers.⁷⁹⁷ Entering a time of change takes people where they have never been before. Smith notes that planning is an on-going process, even when the initial plan is in place. “Change demands that you make stuff up, try things out, see what works and doesn’t, and talk among yourselves a lot. In other words, improvise, act, improvise, act, improvise!”⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹¹ Ibid, 59.

⁷⁹² Ibid, 63.

⁷⁹³ Ibid, 60.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, 63.

⁷⁹⁶ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 165-173.

⁷⁹⁷ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 40-41.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid, 39.

Action

Participation in the transition process is an effective way to enable people to understand the need for change and become emotionally invested in the change.⁷⁹⁹ “Nothing does more for a person’s understanding and desire than the experience of change itself.”⁸⁰⁰ Whether people are reluctant or resistant to a given change, “The way to change attitudes is by changing human behavior.”⁸⁰¹

Planning need not be excessive prior to action as long as it is implemented effectively in the process of taking action. However, participants need to know what they are doing and the goal they are aiming for. Smith explains, “Put people in a position to learn by doing and provide them information and support needed just in time to perform...you must continually create the performance commitments and contexts that give people a chance to *experience* change. Furthermore, you should deploy help—information, training, advice, reinforcement—mostly when people need it to meet specific goals, not before they have even set any goals.”⁸⁰²

Managers can utilize the following diagnostics at this point of action on the wheel of change. “Has the person taken action? Has he or she experienced change in a performance context involving specific and relevant goals?”⁸⁰³ Make it clear that only with their help and support will the change work and the

⁷⁹⁹ “Congregations whose participants express and act out their religious values ‘generate commitment’ and successfully compete for worshippers’ time.” Penny Edgell, “It’s Not Just a Matter of Time: How the Time Squeeze Affects Congregational Participation,” in *Family Ministry* 2, vol. 15, (Summer 2001): 11-26, as cited in Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 38.

⁸⁰⁰ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 60.

⁸⁰¹ Kinlaw, “Preparation for Church Membership,” 202

⁸⁰² Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 39.

⁸⁰³ Ibid, 63.

objectives be accomplished.⁸⁰⁴ Someone else will not implement the needed changes for us. “People’s reluctance to change always has one or more specific causes that you and they can do something about—if only you take the time to listen to them, work with them, and, especially, find some performance-based opportunity for them to experience change itself.”⁸⁰⁵ The demands of today’s society require creative solutions that integrate the needs of more than one participant, whether customer/company or management/labor.

Reinforcement

“Nothing can grow in a self-sustaining way unless there are reinforcing processes underlying its growth.”⁸⁰⁶ “Change is all about a reinforcing cycle of cause and effect.”⁸⁰⁷ Directly managing people’s efforts to change is essential, while providing individuals solution space to learn new ways of doing things.⁸⁰⁸ However, leaders must provide direction, opportunity and energy to help the initiated changes endure. Leaders must beware of the “trap of managing decisions and designs instead of people, performance results, and work.”⁸⁰⁹ While managing people through a transition, the most powerful motivator is performance.⁸¹⁰ Doing and seeing is believing.

A second priority of reinforcement is to update the organizational structure. The existing organizational structure will not adequately handle the new

⁸⁰⁴ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today’s Workers*, 173.

⁸⁰⁵ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 48.

⁸⁰⁶ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 42.

⁸⁰⁷ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 60.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, 60.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid, 60.

way of operating.⁸¹¹ This is the problem of pouring new wine into old wineskins.⁸¹² McIntosh and Reeves recommend assigning a small team to monitor the church's adjustment to the transition and "make recommendations for continuously improving the operations of the life-giving systems."⁸¹³ This is important, since people who are unduly frustrated with inadequate structures and unresponsive leadership may become discouraged or begin to resist the transition.⁸¹⁴

Third, people need reinforcement from leaders and others involved in implementing change. Support and constructive criticism help to maintain momentum as participants improvise a successful transition. The synergy of learning from one another's experiences, both successful and unsuccessful, is imperative to keep the team motivated.⁸¹⁵

When managers follow up on this reinforcement point on the wheel of change, one question to consider is, "What kind of reinforcement did you and

⁸¹¹ Ibid, 60.

⁸¹² Luke 5:37-38 and par.

⁸¹³ This process includes four essential components. First, review scriptural principles of organizational structures. Second, scrutinize the church's current organizational structure, pruning those parts that no longer serve the vision and mission of the church to ensure the church's resources support current priorities. Resources include funds, facilities, time, gifts and energy. Third, study principles shaping viable churches today. Specifically, mission and vision drive the congregation. The organizational structures are shaped and directed by the church's mission. Decentralized tasks and communication through mission-directed teams energizes emerging leaders to risk creative approaches to ministry challenges. Fourth, design a strategy appropriate for one's church, in light of one's unique vision and mission. McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 173-175.

⁸¹⁴ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 103-106, 193-203, 361-380.

⁸¹⁵ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 61-62.

others provide the person when he or she took action?"⁸¹⁶ Managers must be sure to follow-up on the change and praise cooperation.⁸¹⁷

Synergy of Teams

Teamwork is essential to build momentum, maintain motivation, and develop the creative synergy necessary for the transition to be effective long term. Woolever has observed, "Beyond-the-ordinary congregations convey to worshipers the sense that spiritual growth stems from being a 'player' rather than a 'spectator.'"⁸¹⁸ Smith stresses the need to bring more people into responsible roles in the change process. "Continually increase the number of individuals joining you in taking responsibility for change. No one can change behaviors for someone else. People must take responsibility for their own behavior change."⁸¹⁹ However, small groups can provide parishioners both the reason and the power to change.⁸²⁰ McIntosh and Reeves apply these principles to thriving churches that draw together the various resources in the church, the most basic being people, and build them into missional communities:

Leaders are developing communities in which relational skills and emotional intelligence can be used and developed alongside and interacting with skills that are task oriented and strategy driven. These churches realize the interdependency of people and their skills as Christians work together toward mission. All Christians have, of course, personal goals and desires. But interaction with one another in these authentic missional communities results in a synergism from 'iron sharpening iron.' This synergy helps propel

⁸¹⁶ Ibid, 63.

⁸¹⁷ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 165-173.

⁸¹⁸ Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 40.

⁸¹⁹ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 37.

⁸²⁰ Kinlaw, "Preparation for Church Membership", 204.

the mission forward and provides energy, motivation, and magnetism in those who are involved.⁸²¹

Leadership for Implementing Change

Motivation wanes when the vision is not consistently followed-through by the leadership.⁸²² Leaders must lead the way into change in practice and with an openness to other participants that reveals a thorough commitment to living out the transition.⁸²³ Douglas Smith emphasizes that principled leadership committed to implementing change must come from every level of the organization:

Practice leadership based on the courage to live the change you wish to bring about. Change is as change does. The best leaders [at every level] must clearly stake out and relentlessly insist on what they want the organization to become. But in doing so, they must make clear *the principles by which people are expected to get there*—and then prevail relentlessly upon themselves and others in practicing these principles. This demands that you search for every possible opportunity to practice the new skills, behaviors, and working relationships in the very initiatives and programs by which you hope to bring those behaviors about.⁸²⁴

Ecclesiastical Change

Motivating Ecclesiastical Change

Many parishioners see no need for ecclesiastical change. A crisis can serve as a catalyst to inspire people to rethink their position.⁸²⁵ That crisis is usually the consequences of growth or decline in worship attendance and overall church

⁸²¹ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 55.

⁸²² Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 193-196.

⁸²³ Ibid., 195-196.

⁸²⁴ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 43.

⁸²⁵ Malphurs, *Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins*, 95.

participation.⁸²⁶ For churches in decline, the motivation for change may be as stark as to change or die.

American churches are not keeping pace with the changing needs in contemporary society. Win Arn notes that 80 to 85 percent of established churches in America are stagnant in membership or in decline. Lyle Schaller observes that “An average of fifty to sixty congregations in American Protestantism choose to dissolve every week compared to perhaps five to ten that are able and willing to redefine their role.”⁸²⁷

Steve Macchia, studying 2000 churches in New England found, “The healthiest churches are free to implement changes and are unencumbered by congregational political systems.”⁸²⁸ Such flexibility, rather than the age of its members, makes a church young. “A young church is one that adapts easily to change.”⁸²⁹

Self-diagnosis for Ecclesiastical Change

Recognizing the need for change is often an insurmountable barrier. Even when a church experiences an on-going decline of crisis proportions, in the midst of a growing community, most parishioners do not see the need for change. In one instance, a church in an area that doubled in size while the congregation

⁸²⁶ Most parishioners are content with the status quo when key ministries are staffed and offerings are adequate. Most parishioners are “not aware that a plateau precipitates a decline. When it strikes, they are caught unprepared.” Lyle Schaller, *Create Your Own Future!* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 73.

⁸²⁷ Ibid, 13.

⁸²⁸ Steve Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 21.

⁸²⁹ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 173.

experienced declines nearing 50 percent, only 14 percent of the parishioners acknowledged decline would occur if no changes were made, even though the church had experienced 12 years of decline.⁸³⁰ Yet, every parishioner responding claimed their congregation “had the capacity to face the truth about itself and do something about it.”⁸³¹

Determining primary contributors to stagnation and decline in a congregation often eludes those committed to strengthening the church.⁸³² Self-diagnostic evaluations may accurately identify symptoms without revealing root issues.⁸³³ Resistance or reluctance may take the form of denial, making self-diagnostic approaches less than adequate.

Self-diagnosis is an economical way to assess church health.⁸³⁴ People are drawn to healthy churches.⁸³⁵ Self-diagnosis recognizes participants have at least an intuitive sense of church health, and simply need a means to identify what they

⁸³⁰ This congregation experienced a decline in membership from 484 baptized and 333 confirmed in 1980 to 259 baptized and 194 confirmed in 1992. None the less, when asked, “What do you expect will happen if current behavior and practices continue?” 41 percent of the respondents said: We will grow. 45 percent of the respondents said: We will be able to sustain our current membership. 14 percent of the respondents said: We will lose members and decline. Roy M. Oswald and Martin Saarinen. *Why Some Churches Don’t Grow: Factors that Might Motivate Those Not Interested in Growth* (Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1993), 2-3.

⁸³¹ When asked, “Does this church have the capacity to face the truth about itself and do something about it?” 100 percent answered “Yes.” 0 percent answered “No.” *Ibid.*

⁸³² Gary McIntosh, *One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, a division of Baker Book House Co., 1999), 14ff.

⁸³³ This is a major premise in Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 6-7, 13-14.

⁸³⁴ Resources to do a self-diagnosis on one’s church can be found in Macchia, *Becoming A Healthy Church Workbook* and Jim Fann, *The Evangelical Free Church Health Survey* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Church Press, 2004). A series of diagnostic questions can be found in Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 149.

⁸³⁵ Churches that apply Natural Church Development principles over time evidence the phenomena that people are drawn to churches that demonstrate “considerably more love, more forgiveness, more answers to prayer, more wisdom, more spiritual power, and countless other quality factors.” Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 12. Other experts in church health confirm this principle that people are drawn to healthy churches. Gary McIntosh said, “True disciple making results in new disciples finding their way into a relationship with a local church, which, of course, results in church growth.” McIntosh, *One Size Doesn’t Fit All*, 114.

intuit.⁸³⁶ Steve Macchia's book, *Becoming a Healthy Church* offers helpful advice and five study questions at the end of each chapter.⁸³⁷ One study question is for the purpose of self-assessment in each characteristic. This approach helps churches get started, but does not enable them to pick up their blind spots the way a Natural Church Development survey does, since with the empirical Natural Church Development survey, respondents are not aware of all the implications of their responses. Of course, self-diagnosis is part of the process, since even a visiting consultant will ask individuals diagnostic questions. However, the value of an objective eye from the outside should not be underestimated.

Growth Necessitates Change

Research shows there are principles that affect the growth potential of churches based on size.⁸³⁸ Welcoming newcomers to church involves more than providing a place to sit. Kenneth Blanchard notes that with each individual added to a social system, the number of possible interactions multiplies exponentially.⁸³⁹ For instance, with three people in a room, 11 different configurations of communication are possible: A speaks to B; A speaks to B in the presence of C, etc. Add a fourth person and the number of possible interactions leaps to 54.

When a congregation like Christ Church of Beaver Springs averages 94 worshippers, the pastor can be personally involved with key points in

⁸³⁶ “The problem is that each member—and even the pastor—sees only part of the whole. What they point out may be correct as far as it goes, yet fail to capture the total picture.” Jim Fann, *The EFCA Church Health Survey, Measuring Health-2*.

⁸³⁷ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*. Also note the follow-up tools for congregations to address issues of church health revealed in the survey in Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church Workbook*.

⁸³⁸ Alice Mann, *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1998, 2002), 2.

⁸³⁹ As cited in Ibid, 1-2.

parishioners' lives. The pastor can be personally involved in most activities and know the entire church schedule week to week. This pastor-centered approach to ministry begins to break down when attendance reaches 150.⁸⁴⁰

Researchers have identified predictable attendance plateaus where natural attendance increases stall unless the church incorporates necessary changes in form to accommodate the exponential implications of such growth.⁸⁴¹ These attendance plateaus serve as boundaries for three church size-orientations: pastoral, program, and corporate.⁸⁴² Arlin Rothauge defines the pastoral size church as 50-150 worshippers.⁸⁴³ The program size church is 150-350 worshippers. Corporate is over 350 worshippers.⁸⁴⁴

Growth Means Change

These plateau points are accompanied by various subtle hindrances that discourage newcomers from assimilating fully in the life of the church.⁸⁴⁵ George G. Hunter III and Bill M. Sullivan refer to these subtle hindrances as "choice points."⁸⁴⁶ Hunter and Sullivan write:

People may make decisions regarding congregation size that are not overt, formal decisions. In fact, most are informal decisions and sometimes unconscious ones. Interestingly, the conclusions are widely accepted and firmly held. Once these decisions are made, congregations appear to cycle up and down within the size range

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid, 3.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid, 2

⁸⁴² Arlin Rothauge, as cited in Ibid, 3. See also Roy M. Oswald, "How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral Program, and Corporate Sized Churches," in Beth Ann Gaede, ed., *Size Transitions in Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2001), 3-46.

⁸⁴³ Arlin Rothauge, as cited in Ibid, 3.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid, 12

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid, 12

⁸⁴⁶ George G. Hunter III and Bill M. Sullivan, *New Perspectives on Breaking the 200 Barrier* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2005).

allowed by the organizational issues of the choice point. These decisions tend to prevent losses that would cause them to decline below the chosen range, and they resist additions that would move them significantly above that range.⁸⁴⁷

Established members may not recognize such unspoken hindrances, such as: a lack of follow-up with visitors because the busy pastor alone is expected to do that; a crowded, understaffed nursery may discourage visitors from entrusting their children there; and the preferred seats in the sanctuary are occupied by established members.⁸⁴⁸ Despite the warm greetings parishioners extend to visitors, these unspoken signals communicate clearly that this church is not able to accommodate more people.

In contrast to a pastor-centered church at a plateau, which can range from 150-200 worshippers,⁸⁴⁹ program size churches "contain a 'critical mass' of people from different age and interest groups--children, youth, couples, and seniors" in order to make a variety of ministry opportunities possible.⁸⁵⁰ Program size churches add staff but also expand and authenticate the ministries of members "into areas such as pastoral care, new member incorporation, community outreach, and the leadership of small groups for sharing and prayer about members' own life circumstances."⁸⁵¹ Program size churches that ensure members find their place in ministry solidify parishioners' sense of purpose. This enhances morale, which positively affects intrinsic motivation.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, 20.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid, 20.

⁸⁴⁹ Mann, *The In-Between Size Church*, 12.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid, 5

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

The potential impact of intrinsically motivated missional teams is revolutionary, as McIntosh and Reeves describe:

Missional teams enable Christians to morph from a stagnant façade to a revolutionary force with the eventual capacity to transform entire cities...The spiritual lives of pastors and missional team leaders are formed increasingly by interactive approaches, rather than in settings with conventional teaching and preaching. Similarly, more and more congregations are discovering that the spiritual lives of their leaders are developed more significantly, becoming what Tom Bandy describes as *a church in motion rather than a church at rest.*⁸⁵²

Teams are part of a movement to relationship-centered ministry, rather than program-based ministry.⁸⁵³ Steve Macchia found among the 2000 churches he surveyed in New England that, “healthy churches have switched their focus to relationship building within the local church and to developing relationship in the community they are seeking to reach with the Gospel.”⁸⁵⁴

Various Approaches to Ecclesiastical Change

Whether motivated by membership growth, decline, or an urgency to seize the opportunities to reach our ever-changing society with the Gospel, implementing ecclesiastical change requires an accurate assessment and a strategy to affect appropriate changes. A plethora of resources for diagnosing church health and prescribing appropriate solutions exist today, dating back to the Church Growth Movement.

⁸⁵² Thomas G. Bandy, *Road Runner: The Body in Motion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 33-37, as cited in McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 55.

⁸⁵³ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church*, 21.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

Historical Approaches to Ecclesiastical Change

Church Growth Movement

The Church Growth Movement was initiated by Donald McGavran, whose 1959 publication, *How to Grow a Church*, focused on missionaries planting growing churches.⁸⁵⁵ The Church Growth Movement flourished in the early 1970's to the mid 1990's in the United States as McGavran's church growth principles were popularized by C. Peter Wagner, Win Arn, Carl F. George, Elmer Towns and others who applied these principles to local churches.⁸⁵⁶ Church Growth has since been criticized as merely marketing strategies utilizing unbiblical methods.⁸⁵⁷ However, church growth pioneer C. Peter Wagner defines church growth as "all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into

⁸⁵⁵ C. Peter Wagner, *How to Grow A Church*, 2nd ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1976).

⁸⁵⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *Church/Mission Tensions Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1976); *Your Church Can Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1976); *Your Church Can Be Healthy* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1979); *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979); *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (New York: Harper & Row 1981); *Helping Your Church Grow* (Elgin IL: David C. Cook, 1982); *Leading Your Church To Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1984). Win Arn disseminated McGavran's Church Growth teachings through his Institute for American Church Growth, now Church Growth Inc. Internet:

<http://www.churchgrowth.net/about/history.htm> accessed 08 May 2006. Carl George developed Church Growth principles utilizing the meta-church concept, a multiplying cell group strategy that enables laity to minister to evergrowing numbers of parishioners. Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revelle, 1991); *The Coming Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revelle, 1997). Elmer L. Towns applied church growth principles to Sunday Schools in his books, Elmer L. Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools And What Makes Them Grow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969) and *Worlds Largest Sunday School* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1974). The Church Growth Center, now in Corunna, IN, was founded by Kent R. Hunter in 1978, see Ministry Watch, "Church Growth Center." Available at http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F_MinDesc.asp?EIN=382232799; Internet. John Mark Terry, *Church Evangelism: Creating a Culture for Growth in your Congregation* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997) 29-44.

⁸⁵⁷ Critics include Charles Colson, *The Body* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 47, and Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 124, as cited in McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 17.

responsible church membership.”⁸⁵⁸ Christian Schwarz sees Natural Church Development as the rightful heir to the Church Growth Movement.⁸⁵⁹ Schwarz considers numerical growth a natural consequence of church health.⁸⁶⁰

Gary McIntosh asserts, “A congregation that wins people to Christ, assimilates the new converts into the local body, and then teaches them all that Christ commanded can expect to see church growth—numerical and spiritual.” However, Roozen and Hadaway disagree with the notion that “‘spiritually alive’ congregations are also the strongest or fastest-growing congregations.”⁸⁶¹ Woolever and Bruce found in their study that high levels of spiritual growth among worshipers in congregations are a “powerful predictor of *little* numerical growth...congregations strong in the area of spiritual growth are rarely strong in welcoming new people, a congregational strength that powerfully predicts growing in numbers.”⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁸ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1984), 14, as cited in *Ibid*, 18.

⁸⁵⁹ Natural Church Development website, Internet: <http://www.ncd-international.org/public/essence.html> Accessed 05 May 2006.

⁸⁶⁰ “Healthy churches grow,” an observation first made by Donald McGavran in the mid 1970’s. Schwarz calls this the “all by itself” principle, a basic principle of Natural Church Development, as defined in Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12-13. This principle is validated in churches that apply Natural Church Development principles over several years. Schwarz demonstrates people are drawn to churches that demonstrate “considerably more love, more forgiveness, more answers to prayer, more wisdom, more spiritual power, and countless other quality factors.” Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 12. Other experts in church health confirm this principle that people are drawn to healthy churches. Gary McIntosh said, “True disciple making results in new disciples finding their way into a relationship with a local church, which, of course, results in church growth.” McIntosh, *One Size Doesn’t Fit All*, 114.

⁸⁶¹ David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds. *Church and Denominational Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), as cited in Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 15.

⁸⁶² *Ibid*, 23.

C. Peter Wagner: Your Church Can Be Healthy

C. Peter Wagner identified seven diseases afflicting church health, in a later edition updated his list to nine.⁸⁶³ Schwarz's thinking echoes Wagner when he wrote, "One of the signs of good church health is growth. If it is faithful to the Lord, and if it is in a healthy condition, [God] will add 'to the church daily such as should be saved.'"⁸⁶⁴

Kennon Callahan: Twelve Keys to an Effective Church

Kennon Callahan focused his diagnostic approach to strategic church planning on the local congregation. Callahan personally consulted with over 750 churches to comprise his extensive list of "missional objectives:" facilities; accessibility; visibility; programs; and financial resources.⁸⁶⁵ Callahan's underlying concern is "the relational factors that contribute to mission and success."⁸⁶⁶

Callahan's second criterion is pastoral and lay visitation. A local congregation, with an average worship attendance of 200, has visitation and outreach well in place when the pastor and laity conduct twenty visits a week with members and twenty visits a week with unchurched persons in the community.⁸⁶⁷ Adequate visitation to persons who are hospitalized or homebound is another

⁸⁶³ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), and "Nine Church Diseases," *Leadership* 18 (Summer 1997): 39, adapted from *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996).

⁸⁶⁴ Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy*, 17.

⁸⁶⁵ Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strategies for Mission* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1983), xii-xiii.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid, xii.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid, 11.

important factor in this criterion.⁸⁶⁸ Callahan concludes, “If a local church could have only two of the twelve strengths …it would be important for mission and visitation to be the two.”⁸⁶⁹

Relationship is another key component Callahan identified. Callahan observes:

People search for community, not for committees. People will put up with being on committees to the extent that they have discovered community… Most people engage in a persistent search for the kind of community that will enrich their lives… they are searching for people with whom they can live out life together.⁸⁷⁰

Contemporary Approaches to Ecclesiastical Change

The Christian church in the twenty-first century has an abundance of resources available to diagnose and strategically plan a viable church.

Natural Church Development: An Empirical Study

Natural Church Development was the resource used in this case study. Natural Church Development assesses the health of a church in eight essential areas called quality characteristics. Christian Schwarz, originator of Natural Church Development, has identified principles of church growth based on empirical studies of thousands of churches worldwide.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid, 12.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid, 35.

⁸⁷¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 8-19. The initial study included 1,000 churches. In a subsequent publication, the total of surveyed churches numbered 40,000. Christian Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 12.

Church growth, according to Schwarz, is the natural byproduct of church health.⁸⁷² Natural Church Development operates on the premise that when a church reaches a sufficient level of health in all eight areas, growth is a natural consequence.⁸⁷³ This phenomenon of church health resulting in church growth is observable, measurable, and useful for identifying blockages to growth.⁸⁷⁴ One purpose of the Natural Church Development survey is to identify the weakest area of church health, or minimum factor, in order to implement strategies to raise this minimum factor. Due to the interdependence of the organic components of church life, improvement in one area affects every other area as well.⁸⁷⁵ Jim Herrington, et. al, concur, highlighting the complexity of systems and the importance of health in every area:

A change in one component will ripple through the entire system. Our mental models, however, tend to simplify the system. As a result, leaders routinely underestimate the complexity of congregational life. They want to explain each issue easily and to intervene directly and decisively. In reality, any given issue is influenced by all of the actions, attitudes, decisions, people, and artifacts that constitute the congregation. This interaction takes place regardless of whether it is seen or understood.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷² Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12.

⁸⁷³ Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 104.

⁸⁷⁴ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid, 66. Thriving churches “realize the interdependency of people and their skills as Christians work together toward mission.” McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 55.

⁸⁷⁶ Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 153.

Natural Church Development Assessment and Follow-up

A Natural Church Development survey can reflect insights into a congregation's health, or deficiency, which the congregation can address themselves. Congregations can follow up a diagnostic survey with the *Implementation Guide* supplied by Natural Church Development. Congregations may also utilize the services of a consultant. A trained Natural Church Development coach can guide the congregation through the process.⁸⁷⁷ A Natural Church Development coach with training that goes beyond Natural Church Development will be more helpful to churches gaining a fairer assessment of their church's context. While striving for universal principals, Natural Church Development is not able to take into account the realities of ethnic and demographic contexts.

Natural Church Development's Wider Application

One could apply the principles of Natural Church Development, including the eight quality characteristics, to assemblies outside the Christian faith. Natural Church Development intentionally "does not confine itself to the language of any one denomination or devotional style."⁸⁷⁸

Schwarz's View of Scripture

Schwarz does not hold to an evangelical view of the inerrancy of

⁸⁷⁷ Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.

⁸⁷⁸ Christian Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How Natural Church Development Can Transform Theological Thinking* (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1999), 110.

Scripture. Schwarz holds to biblical authority based on functionality,⁸⁷⁹ citing Martin Luther, for whom Christ is the word of God, who asked whether or not the Scripture texts in question “advance Christ.”⁸⁸⁰ Schwarz is clear that “the tools we develop should serve [God’s] purposes as revealed to us in the Bible.”⁸⁸¹

As a German Lutheran, Schwarz does embrace what he calls “The Second Reformation: Pietism.”⁸⁸² Pietism emphasizes “the devotion of the heart, a new relationship to the Bible, regeneration, assurance of salvation, evangelism, and sanctification.”⁸⁸³ Pietism was not a new theology but rather a reform of the spiritual life through devotedly living out Reformation theology.

For Schwarz, the issue is not the inerrancy of the Bible but dead orthodoxy. To say one is orthodox, or that one holds to orthodox doctrine is not enough. For Schwarz, the issue is *Orthopraxy*. Does one actually put into practice the orthodoxy one professes? Schwarz applauds how the church over the centuries developed in faith, fellowship and service utilizing the “normative standard” of the canon.⁸⁸⁴ Schwarz sees the church’s ultimate goal is not an efficient organization or seamless doctrine, but to advance Christ and to build up His church overflowing with believers living out God’s love and truth.

⁸⁷⁹ While the term “functionality” occurs nowhere in scripture, the concept is found throughout, from the functionality of the creation in Genesis to the functional integration of diverse gifts in the Body of Christ, the church (1 Cor. 12). All living things in God’s creation are characterized by their ability to bear fruit. “You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). We check an organism’s health by inspecting the quality and quantity of its fruit. Functionality asks the question, “Is this activity doing what it is intended to do fruitful for the kingdom of God or not?” Ibid, 67.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid, 113.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid, 110.

⁸⁸² Ibid, 88.

⁸⁸³ Ibid, 90.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid, 116.

Christian Schwarz laments “the (false and dangerous) conviction that a fundamentalist view of the Bible can guarantee the word of God.”⁸⁸⁵ Schwarz says the view of verbal inspiration that holds “every Greek iota and every Hebrew vowel mark” as specifically dictated by God “is untenable from the outset,” since the original autographs are lost.⁸⁸⁶ Such a mechanistic view of inspiration replaces faith in Christ with faith in the infallibility of the Bible. Otto Weber remarks, “If we are to think like that, it is not easy to understand why the church is necessary at all. Reading at home the word of God should surely be enough; perhaps even merely to have a copy of it in the home! The sacred word would be, in itself, the revelation, it would be *theophorous*.⁸⁸⁷

Schwarz insists, however, that the:

Revelation of which the Bible speaks is undoubtedly objective. But this objective element is not the church, nor doctrine, nor tradition—it is Jesus Christ himself. Faith is the event by which what Christ has objectively done becomes a subjective reality for us. It is only then that revelation achieves its aim.⁸⁸⁸

Faith, or *pistis*:

In the New Testament does not mean accepting a doctrine, it means trust in God: commitment, relinquishing internal security and external guarantees, complete dependence. We can only be so dependent on someone who is so reliable that we need no guarantees.⁸⁸⁹

Schwarz asserts that:

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid, 116.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid, 117.

⁸⁸⁷ Otto Weber, quoted in Ibid, 119. Theophorous means “derived from a god,” available from <http://www.ancientroute.com/Dictionary/dictionary2.htm#T>, Internet, accessed 7 December 2004.

⁸⁸⁸ Christian Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift*, 101.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid.

The biblical concept of faith must be protected from the (monistic) misconception that regards the essence of faith in assenting to a doctrine (*dogmatism*), accepting biblical contents as “true” (*fundamentalism*), or following a particular moral code (*legalism*).⁸⁹⁰

Schwarz is an international Christian, committed to an ecumenical approach that transcends the dogmas of limited paradigms, denominational paradigms among them.⁸⁹¹ He cites a personal correspondence from Donald McGavran, who wrote:

As long as these branches of the universal Church believe in Jesus Christ as God and only Savior, as long as they believe in the triune God, as long as they accept the Bible as God’s perfect revelation, they are parts of the body of Christ. They will of course differ on certain convictions.⁸⁹²

However, without being specific, Schwarz concedes he could not personally endorse the statements McGavran wrote.

Schwarz’s Neo-Orthodoxy is evident in his view of Scripture. Many Evangelicals do not hold to the extreme dictation theory of inspiration that Schwarz rejects. The question remains how one can present a truly objective revelation of Jesus Christ without an authoritative Word from the Scriptures.

On the other hand, Schwarz gives testimony to his coming to know Christ personally, with his sin being erased in an evangelical church.⁸⁹³ He also testifies to experiencing a miraculous healing by God through prayer.⁸⁹⁴ He likewise cites the peace and social justice church of his upbringing. He says, “In my own

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid, 76-78.

⁸⁹² From a letter of Donald McGavran, 4 March 1988, as cited in Ibid, 77-78.

⁸⁹³ Christian Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 46.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid, 47.

pilgrimage, I have had three significant encounters with the same God, but each time I got to know different aspects of who he is.”⁸⁹⁵ Schwarz asserts he is not a Liberal or a Modernist, but an Evangelical Christian.⁸⁹⁶

Implications for Church Health

Notably absent from Schwarz’s list of essentials is what George Barna calls “facilitating systematic theological growth.” Barna documents the pressing need in today’s church to know and live out sound systematic theology. Schwarz deliberately avoids the issue of theology as a factor of church health.⁸⁹⁷ Schwarz’s expressed purpose is to identify through empirically verifiable means the features growing churches have in common, unencumbered by any theological predisposition.⁸⁹⁸ He commends these empirical results as consistent with Scriptural teaching, which validates the premise that *Natural Church Development* is inherent in the way anything grows in God’s orderly creation. Schwarz’s quality characteristic that most closely parallels Barna’s facilitating systematic theological growth, is passionate spirituality. However, unless one is specific about Who and what one is passionate about, the church can fall into theological error.

⁸⁹⁵ These three components constitute the three sectors of Schwarz’s *Trinitarian compass*. Our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each represent three essential components necessary for a balanced understanding of God’s revelation on a given issue. Father, associated with creation and wisdom, includes interest in social justice issues. Jesus represents the Gospel dimensions of conversion, discipleship, sacrifice and Biblical understanding. The Holy Spirit represents the miraculous and power dimensions of the Gospel, including prayer and faith. Ibid, 47.

⁸⁹⁶ Carl Shank, Natural Church Development Consultant who personally interviewed Christian Schwarz in 1998, interview by writer, 24 June 2006, Vernon, CT.

⁸⁹⁷ Christian Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 105.

⁸⁹⁸ Christian Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift*, 78. See also Christian Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 105.

Church discipline is not addressed in Natural Church Development. Under functional structures, Schwarz notes that one must take responsibility for existing structures, identify enhancing and hindering structures and determine a plan of action to benefit the church.⁸⁹⁹ However, discipline is applied to programs rather than individuals, enhancing growth rather than correcting doctrinal error. The closest any quality characteristic comes to addressing this question of discipline is under loving relationships. Facing and resolving conflict are among the factors addressed by loving relationships.⁹⁰⁰ Again, this is focused on group harmony more than doctrinal purity.

Schwarz has developed a useful, empirical tool that measures eight characteristics of church health, each one significant. Churches, especially conservative evangelical churches, would appreciate supplementing Natural Church Development resources with one or more other resources that examine the theological integrity of the church.

Mark Dever: 9 Marks of a Healthy Church

Dever's intent is to alert Church leaders to theological essentials of church life and practice that will sustain biblical, God-glorifying growth. Dever is intentional to craft his presentation on the foundation of God's Self-revelation in Scripture and the Reformer's three marks of the church.⁹⁰¹ Dever does not see

⁸⁹⁹ Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*, 76ff.

⁹⁰⁰ Robert E. Logan and Thomas T. Clegg, *Releasing Your Church's Potential*, revised 4/2000 ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 9-8 ff..

⁹⁰¹ Mark E. Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, Second edition (Washington D.C.: Center for Church Reform, 1998), 7-9.

other evaluative approaches as applicable to the church, which, as the Body of Christ, is qualitatively different than secular businesses or civic organizations.

Dever's nine marks include: expository preaching; plurality of elders; church discipline; and biblical theology. Dever starts with biblical theology, particularly a clearly defined understanding of the Gospel, conversion, evangelism, church membership and discipleship.

This theological approach lacks the verifiable evidence to determine whether churches that affirm this theology actually put it into practice. Assent is not implementation. In contrast, Natural Church Development measures identifiable behavior as evidence of what a church actually believes, based on what they actually practice. Actual church practices are quantified and presented in the church's profile as a mirror reflection of what the church actually does, regardless of what members say or profess.

Two Views of Preaching Through Congregational Change

The first mark of a healthy church, according to Dever, is expositional preaching.

Expositional preaching is finally not so much about how we say what we say, but about how we decide what to say. It is not marked by a particular form, but by biblical content...preaching a passage of Scripture in context expositorily—taking the point of the passage as the point of the message—we hear things from God we did not intend to hear when we began.⁹⁰²

In this way the church is conformed to the mind of God rather than that of the pastor.

⁹⁰² Ibid, 5-6.

Satterlee agrees that “Congregations are motivated by God’s word and not the preacher’s.”⁹⁰³ While Satterlee and Dever come from two widely divergent points on the theological spectrum, Satterlee develops the often under-utilized task of adequately exegeting the situation in order to appropriately apply God’s word. He notes:

Preaching can easily be undone if the preacher is perceived as uninformed, oversimplifying, misrepresenting, stereotyping, and even unintentionally distorting the truth. Only by accurately comprehending the change and transition can the preacher help the congregation understand the change and transition in light of the gospel and respond in faith.⁹⁰⁴

Satterlee advocates using the congregational transition as a lens through which the preacher studies Scripture.⁹⁰⁵ Preachers must be diligent students not only of the specific change and the implications of implementing the transition, but also the various reactions and dynamics within and throughout the congregation.⁹⁰⁶ Wisdom, according to Satterlee, comes from actively listening to as many voices as possible within, as well as outside, the congregation.⁹⁰⁷

Satterlee says:

To determine the message of the sermon, preachers listen *to* the change, transition, congregation, and greater community. Preachers listen *for* the voice of preaching, the theological issues at stake,

⁹⁰³ Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 128.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid, 71.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid, 51.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid, 56.

⁹⁰⁷ In contrast to expository preaching, Satterlee cites David Buttrick who “starts with a hermeneutic of lived experience.” This “preaching the praxis mode” approach to sermon preparation maintains that “Scripture and the transition interpret one another.” However, according to this view, “while the ‘original’ or historical’ meaning of Scripture certainly contributes to preaching, it is not determinative because the Bible is more than an ancient document.” David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 405, as cited in Ibid, 47.

and the impact the transition has on the congregation and preacher.⁹⁰⁸

Satterlee is careful to warn against “employing Scripture in ways contrary to the biblical witness and tradition and isolating Scripture or knitting passages together to ‘prove’ a preferred agenda or a predetermined course of action.”⁹⁰⁹

However, Satterlee goes so far as to assert that the context of a congregational transition is primary, so that, “reading the newspaper and going to the library become more important than exegesis.”⁹¹⁰ Self awareness and a sound perspective of the situation are so elusive during the upheaval of a transition, that Satterlee continues:

During congregational transitions, pastors often function rather than feel. We lose track of how we are feeling in the transition...hurt, unaffected, bored, fragile, vulnerable, under attack. But feelings will catch up. Left unaddressed, the preacher’s anger, sadness, disappointment and stress will reveal themselves in preaching...It is essential to preaching and leading that preachers remain centered in themselves and anchored in God amid the storms of congregational transition.⁹¹¹

This writer appreciates Satterlee’s insight into the nuances of congregational transition, although Satterlee grossly overstates the importance of context in a way that listens to the world and the people at the real risk of squelching the voice of God in Scripture. Contrast Moses and Aaron at Mount Sinai in Exodus 32. Aaron stands as a conspicuous testimony to a leader who

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid, 56.

⁹⁰⁹ At odds with Dever’s position, Satterlee says, “In times of congregational transition, our approach to Scripture is more evocative than exegetical. We are more concerned with framing, reflecting on, and encountering God in the interplay of Scripture and the transition than in uncovering the original meaning of a text.” Ibid, 47.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid, 72.

⁹¹¹ Ibid, 87-88.

listened to the context to the neglect of sound exegesis and application of God's Word. Even though Moses was outraged with Aaron and the Israelites worshipping the gold calf, he maintained such a rapport with God that he was able to effectively intercede for the people and proclaim an authentic word from God.

Steve Macchia: Becoming A Healthy Church

Macchia utilizes self-scored tools to make this church health survey as economical and user-friendly as possible.⁹¹² Macchia's survey intentionally seeks to get as many parishioners as possible to complete the survey, from the leadership team as well as the congregation. This is good for congregational ownership of the process, conversation among parishioners about the topics mentioned and the data collected is more representative of the larger congregation than Natural Church Development's survey, which is limited to thirty leaders who are also involved in a small group.

Macchia presents an insightful overview of ten characteristics of healthy churches. His sample of 2,000 churches in New England is considerably smaller than Schwarz's international assessment of over 40,000 churches.⁹¹³ Macchia's results are remarkably similar, with some crucial additions. Two categories Macchia adds are: networking with the Body of Christ and God's empowering Presence.

God's empowering Presence recognizes that a "healthy church actively seeks the Holy Spirit's direction and empowerment for its daily life and

⁹¹² Steve Macchia, interview by writer, 10 January 2006, South Hamilton, MA.

⁹¹³ Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 12.

ministry.”⁹¹⁴ The heart, mind and will of leaders and parishioners are yielded to God as Lord of all. These churches recognize that to be empowered with God’s Presence means to expand one’s vision beyond one’s local congregation to see God’s kingdom come, God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.⁹¹⁵

Macchia’s other eight characteristics overlap Schwarz’s quality characteristics with some distinctives appropriate for churches. Schwarz’s “effective structures” characteristic is reframed by Macchia as “wise administration and accountability.” Accountability is a great need in the church today. Schwarz’s gift-based ministry is expanded by Macchia as stewardship and generosity. Macchia introduces financial giving in the context of stewardship of all God has supplied individuals. Schwarz’s holistic small groups characteristic is reframed by Macchia to specify the desired outcome of learning and growing in community.

Rick Warren: The Purpose Driven Life

Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life* is a popularization of basic ecclesiology and discipleship. The benefit of this best-selling book, with its study guide and small group video teaching aids, is that it has exposed great numbers of people to basic teaching on ecclesiology and discipleship. This popular theology is written to motivate people to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and to order their lives according to the five purposes Warren identifies.⁹¹⁶ This study appeals to a

⁹¹⁴ Macchia, *Becoming A Healthy Church*, 27.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Warren’s five purposes are: worship, fellowship, discipleship, mission and evangelism.

wide audience with its readability and practical application. It appeals to evangelical laity because of its citing over 1200 Scripture passages related to each topic.⁹¹⁷ The accompanying video teaching for small group study utilizes group dynamics to motivate application of lessons learned.

Some challenge this Purpose Driven approach as inadequate to move “beyond good thinking to purposeful action.”⁹¹⁸ Knowing one’s purpose does not empower one to carry it out.

The five purposes Rick Warren describes in *The Purpose Driven Life* fit perfectly as they overlay Macchia’s ten traits of a healthy church.⁹¹⁹ However, the aspect of missions is conspicuously absent from Warren’s list.

George Barna: Habits of Highly Effective Churches

Barna offers valuable research statistics on how American churches measure up to the nine criteria he determines constitutes a healthy church.⁹²⁰ These nine criteria line up closely with Schwarz’s eight quality characteristics. Barna raises crucial nuances not thoroughly covered in Natural Church Development. Like Macchia in *Becoming a Healthy Church*, Barna expands Schwarz’s gift-based ministry into holistic stewardship.

⁹¹⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), jacket cover.

⁹¹⁸ Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 7.

⁹¹⁹ From an email from Rick Warren to Steve Macchia, as reported in an interview by the author, 10 January 2006, South Hamilton, MA.

⁹²⁰ George Barna, *The Habits of Highly Effective Churches: Being Strategic in Your God-given Ministry* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999).

Denise Goodman: Congregational Fitness

Denise Goodman views congregational fitness in terms of handling conflict in healthy ways. Church health is not equated with being free of conflict, since “just about every authority on church conflict views low-level conflict as normal and healthy.”⁹²¹ By developing personal responsibility, accountability and acceptance of ambiguity, one is fit to handle the inevitable conflicts in the community of faith.

The U. S. Congregational Life Survey

The U. S. Congregational Life Survey uses a sociological approach based on congregational strengths common to all congregations within and beyond Christendom.⁹²² These writers contend that everything a congregation needs to transform its future has already been given by God or is readily available.⁹²³ This effort seeks to move beyond “theological agendas that are seldom inclusive,” and what they perceive as a dominant focus on congregational weaknesses, to identify and build upon what makes congregations strong.⁹²⁴ Woolever and Bruce maintain that “All congregations are strong, in different ways...The more congregations focus on what is working and use their strengths effectively, the stronger they become.”⁹²⁵ Congregations are wise to glean their best efforts

⁹²¹ Denise W. Goodman, *Congregational Fitness: Healthy Practices for Layfolk* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2000), 12.

⁹²² Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 2.

⁹²³ Ibid, 11.

⁹²⁴ The authors are critical of Natural Church Development as focusing on weaknesses to the neglect of strengths. Ibid, 2, 11.

⁹²⁵ Joe Hall and Sue Hammond, “What is Appreciative Inquiry?” (Thin Book Publishing Company, www.thinbook.com), as cited in Ibid, 14-15.

throughout their history in determining their vision for the future. By building on their strengths, congregations can maximize their potential.

The U. S. Congregational Life Survey involved 2,000 U. S. congregations with 300,000 worshippers.⁹²⁶ The International Congregational Life Survey involved 12,000 congregations with 1.2 million worshippers from 4 countries.⁹²⁷ The ten strengths identified that work together to make a congregation viable are: “1) spirituality and faith development, 2) meaningful worship services, 3) participation in congregational activities, 4) a sense of belonging to the congregation, 5) caring for children and youth in the congregation, 6) community involvement, 7) sharing faith with others, 8) welcoming new people, 9) empowering congregational leadership, and 10) a vision for the congregation’s future.”⁹²⁸

Congregational Life Survey In Contrast to Natural Church Development

Three points are noteworthy when contrasting the U. S. Congregational Life Survey with Natural Church Development. First, note the remarkable similarity in the findings of these two analyses. Each of the strengths identified in the U. S. Congregational Life Survey can be accounted for in Natural Church Development’s eight quality characteristics.⁹²⁹

Second, Woolever and Bruce criticize Natural Church Development for “undocumented social science research” that is invested in fixing one primary weakness to make “everything right” at the expense of developing potential

⁹²⁶ Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 8-10.

⁹²⁷ Ibid, 138-139.

⁹²⁸ Ibid, 10.

⁹²⁹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 22-37.

strengths.⁹³⁰ Christian Schwarz would argue against this strategy of strengthening one's strengths. Schwarz portrays the eight quality characteristics as eight wooden staves in a barrel.⁹³¹ The barrel's capacity to hold water is limited by the height of the lowest barrel stave. Likewise, a church's health and capacity for growth is limited by its weakest essential health characteristic. If one should take the longest barrel stave, one's greatest strength, and extend it to twice its initial height, the barrel's effective capacity would remain unchanged.

Third, Woolever and Bruce's criticism that the Natural Church Development process removes members most invested in the congregation "from the discernment or decision-making process" has merit with regards to the survey itself, but neglects the work of the Natural Church Development implementation team. This U. S. Congregational Life Survey did include all members of a congregation in the survey process, rather than a limited number of 30 as done by Natural Church Development.

Thriving Churches: Life-Giving Systems

McIntosh and Reeves have identified ten life-giving systems that must each be healthy for the Body of Christ to experience the synergistic positive momentum Schwarz calls the "all by itself" principle.⁹³² Turning from Natural Church Development to McIntosh and Reeves' ten life-giving systems, one immediately recognizes in the first three systems, grouped together under

⁹³⁰ Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 7-8.

⁹³¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 52-53.

⁹³² McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 43. The "all by itself" principle is defined in Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 12-13.

“Critical Point A: Generating Spiritual Energy,” an emphasis on spiritual, rather than simply sociological dimensions of church life.⁹³³

Critical Point A: Generating Spiritual Energy

McIntosh and Reeves’ first life-giving system, the pastor’s spiritual life, takes a more intimate look at the heart of Church health. Pastors must be shepherds who operate according to their heart’s integrity.⁹³⁴ Issues that impede an undivided heart include: ministry overextension, the optimum span of care for a pastor is five to seven people; lack of transparency, it is often not safe for the pastor to be open about spiritual struggles and victories; few, if any, close relationships to share struggles and nurture the pastor’s spiritual life. Recent emphases in some leading churches in personal discipleship and spiritual disciplines have yielded more authentic ministry as pastors “pour their lives into a few carefully selected leaders.”⁹³⁵

Corporate intercession, the second life-giving system, rather than presuming church people will be faithful in prayer, strategically enlists specialty teams of intercessors to focus like a laser beam on the blockages and untapped potential God will use when the church takes off.⁹³⁶

⁹³³ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 45.

⁹³⁴ Ps. 78:72. McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 48-49.

⁹³⁵ Ibid, 53-54.

⁹³⁶ Ibid, 61-72.

Spiritual disciplines, the third life-giving system, recognize the church is like a team that needs every member's soul replenished regularly with divine spiritual energy.⁹³⁷

Critical Point B: Developing Effective Leaders

Mentoring relationships, the first of two life-giving systems in this second category, involves everyone in the church in leadership development, whether in upward, downward or lateral mentoring relationships.⁹³⁸ In such mentoring relationships, spiritual gifts are identified, matched to appropriate ministry and monitored for effectiveness.⁹³⁹

Team ministry, the fifth life-giving system, is not an additional church program but “involves a change at the heart of individuals, a change in culture, core values, perspective, and practice.”⁹⁴⁰ This constitutes a significant transition spanning several years in the life of a church.⁹⁴¹

Critical Point C: Increasing People Flow

This critical point teaches how to accelerate the flow of unchurched people becoming responsible and reproductive team leaders in the church.⁹⁴² The two components of this critical point are people flow strategy and lifestyle evangelism.

⁹³⁷ Ibid, 73-85.

⁹³⁸ Ibid, 91-101.

⁹³⁹ Ibid, 98.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid, 114.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, 115.

⁹⁴² Ibid, 128.

People flow strategy equips leadership teams to become authentic missional communities that “reproduce the fundamentals of ministry in others.”⁹⁴³ Newcomers may enter the church through the “front door” of programming (music, preaching, facility) or the “side door” of being ministered to in the community.⁹⁴⁴ The focus here is to have a deliberate flow strategy that channels people away from the “back door” to discipleship opportunities.

Life-giving system seven is lifestyle evangelism.⁹⁴⁵ An intentional team-based strategy is necessary to enlist and empower parishioners to actually engage in lifestyle evangelism.⁹⁴⁶ Four levels of training are presented: serving; inviting; befriending; winning.⁹⁴⁷

Critical Point D: Charting Amid Change

This fourth critical point, charting amid change, equips the church to operate strategically amidst the dramatically changing culture. The three life-giving systems in this category are charting the future, streamlining the organization, and thriving on change.

Life-giving system eight, charting the future, utilizes “the three proven phases of planning: assessing trends, determining direction, and implementing strategies.”⁹⁴⁸

⁹⁴³ Ibid, 129.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid, 130-132.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid, 149-157.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid, 151.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid, 151-153.

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid, 162.

Churches assessing trends typically utilize demographic data. These authors present the value of also using psychographics, which are the beliefs and attitudes of a defined segment of the population, and dynographics, the spiritual history of an area or congregation.⁹⁴⁹ The church's strategic impact will be increased by targeting a particular culture and casting the gospel in a manner consistent with that culture while maintaining biblical fidelity.⁹⁵⁰

Determining direction has four components: mission; values; vision; goals. A mission, or purpose statement, is the biblical reason a church exists. Core values determine the way the church will carry out its mission. An effective vision statement must be “captivating, compelling, and comprehensive.”⁹⁵¹ “Goals are the measurable outcomes a church must accomplish to fulfill their vision during the next 3-5 years.”⁹⁵² Action steps detail the time frame and specify those who will implement each step to reach each goal. Attention to detail is important for the first two years. Beyond two years, ongoing change and insight can render detailed long-range plans too limiting.

Charting the future and implementing effective strategies requires a thorough understanding of the church's DNA, its unique identity, shape and mission, in order to minister out of its strengths. This insight into the uniqueness of one's congregation unleashes creative synergy far superior to any attempt to clone programs from other churches in a very different context.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid, 167.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid, 168-169.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid, 165.

⁹⁵² Ibid, 165.

The ninth life-giving system, streamlining the organization, addresses the church's ability to adapt to change. This process includes four essential components.⁹⁵³ First, review scriptural principles of organizational structures. Second, scrutinize the church's current organizational structure, pruning those parts that no longer serve the vision and mission of the church to ensure the church's resources support current priorities. Resources include funds, facilities, time, gifts and energy. Third, study principles shaping viable churches today. Specifically, mission and vision drive thriving congregations. Therefore, the organizational structure needs to be shaped and directed by the church's mission. Also, decentralized tasks and communication through mission-directed teams energizes emerging leaders to risk creative approaches to ministry challenges. Fourth, design a strategy appropriate for one's church, in light of one's unique vision and mission.

The tenth life-giving system, thriving on change, addresses three key areas to keep churches abreast of ongoing change dynamics: increased mobility; increased diversity; and increased complexity.⁹⁵⁴ This increasingly mobile culture creates new challenges for churches to reach and equip people for ministry who may not stay. Increased diversity is not simply ethnic, economic, or generational, but further individualized preferences in this era of catering to every nuance makes planning ministry experiences and programs far more complex.

⁹⁵³ Ibid, 173-175.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid, 184.

Navigating the seas of change requires innovation and clear communication at every level of the congregation.⁹⁵⁵ “Effective communication within the church in a time of complexity requires multiple types, styles, and pathways to get the message through and understood. A message cannot be repeated often enough.”⁹⁵⁶ The leaders of healthy, growing, reproductive churches can distinguish core issues, whether an obstacle or an opportunity, from secondary issues and address them quickly. Beginning with an analysis of the situation, these leaders present clear, realistic action steps for the church to implement. Once the issue is addressed satisfactorily, the leadership team turns its attention to other issues.⁹⁵⁷ This process enhances the church’s momentum.

Finally, downsizing the leaders’ span of care to a team of ten, which is four other leaders and spouses of each, provides the personal relationships where trust enhances productivity. Communication is more fluid, enabling resourcing and authority to the rest of the church to flow with compelling authenticity.

Summary

This chapter presented the critical issues pertaining to motivating change in secular settings as well as motivating ecclesiastical change. First, the phenomenon of change was shown to be a natural part of life and inherent to the church’s ministry effectiveness as well as to the Gospel message itself. Second, the theory of motivation was discussed, including incorporating intrinsic motivation as a way to motivate those reluctant or resistant to change. Several

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid, 186.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid, 188.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid, 188.

strategies for implementing change were presented. Third, an historical overview of ecclesiastical change and a summary of contemporary strategies for implementing ecclesiastical change were presented. It was found that Natural Church Development's empirical survey was an effective alternative to self-diagnosis in order to reveal blind spots congregations may have with regards to some areas of church health. However, due to Schwarz's view of Scripture, this writer asserts that Natural Church Development would be better received in an evangelical church with supplemental resources for laity with biblical and theological rationales for the elements of church health. The next chapter will describe the steps taken to assess the accuracy of this assertion.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH QUESTION AND DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter will describe the actual steps taken to address the problem identified in chapter one. The thesis will be summarized followed by a description of preparations undertaken, resources researched and developed and the procedures followed to ensure the successful completion of this project. A summary analysis of the content presented each week of the project as exposure to biblical theology will be shown. A detailed analysis of the survey instrument, the purpose for key questions related to the thesis, and the process used in implementing the survey will be presented.

Purpose of the Project

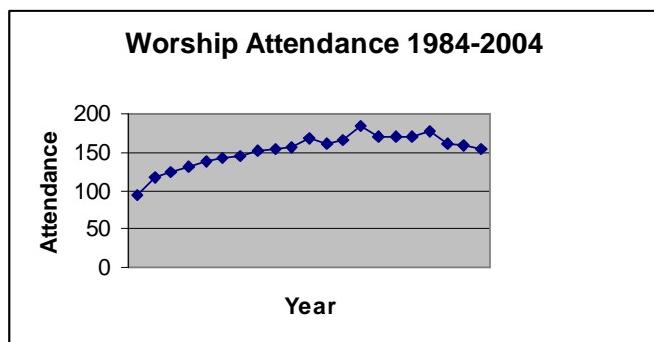
The purpose of this project is to increase parishioners' exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended changes to improve church health in order to determine if such exposure is associated with an increase in their willingness to implement these recommended changes. The congregation in this case study used the recommendations of a Natural Church Development survey

and implementation guide in the context of prayer, Bible study and dialogue in order to determine recommended changes. A significant level of resistance from a number of influential members prompted this researcher to investigate ways to increase parishioners' willingness to participate in implementing recommended changes. Based on dialogue with resistant parishioners and the church's Natural Church Development Implementation Team, this researcher asserted that additional exposure to the biblical underpinnings for the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development would provide the basis for parishioners to comprehend the biblical rationale for the recommended changes. It is the assertion of this researcher that such biblical exposure would not only decrease parishioners' resistance, but actually increase their willingness to participate in implementing recommended changes. This researcher asserts that providing parishioners the opportunity to see the recommended change is consistent with biblical principles for church life, values, procedures and priorities will increase their motivation to implement the recommended change.

The success of this project will be demonstrated by a statistically significant increase in a parishioner's willingness to implement recommended changes related to exposure to the biblical rationale for the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development. Therefore, this project intends to show a positive correlation between increased exposure to the biblical rationale for recommended changes and a reported increase in a parishioner's willingness to implement recommended changes.

Project Setting

This project was conducted by the senior pastor in cooperation with the leadership and parishioners of Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA. The senior pastor was in the midst of his twentieth year at Christ Church when this project was implemented. After twelve years of consistent growth in worship attendance, doubling the size of the worshipping congregation, Christ Church was now in her seventh year of declining worship attendance.⁹⁵⁸



A Natural Church Development survey was conducted in February, 2003. An Implementation Team was formed to interpret the results to the congregation and determine recommended changes to increase the church's minimum factor. The survey revealed a weakness that the members and pastor all viewed as a real strength. Christ Church's minimum factor, or lowest score, was determined to be loving relationships. This low loving relationship score so surprised the members and pastor of Christ Church that a number of members were actually offended. The pastor routinely asks participants in the new members' classes what attracted them to Christ Church. The typical answer is the warm welcome and caring

⁹⁵⁸ The average worship attendance in 1984 was 94. In 1997 the average worship attendance was 184. In the next seven years, worship attendance dropped to an annual average of 154, according to Christ Church attendance records.

congregation. Not only was loving relationships an area the pastor and congregation of Christ Church would not have determined without an empirical tool like Natural Church Development, but this determination continues to be difficult to accept by some members. Natural Church Development exposes blockages to health that one may not otherwise recognize.

One significant determiner of Christ Church's low loving relationships score was the lack of contact parishioners had with other parishioners outside of Sunday morning.⁹⁵⁹ Also, being a small town in a rural community, most parishioners are locals with extensive family connections in the immediate community. Therefore, most parishioners have little time or need to develop relationships with those outside their established social network.

Previous small group studies, then known as Spiritual Adventures, were conducted in the church building. After an opening time of praise and worship in the sanctuary, participants split up into groups that met in various classrooms in the church building. At its zenith, these Spiritual Adventures drew over seventy participants. The last few attempts attracted no more than thirty.

Two successful attempts to address the low loving relationship score prior to this project were two six-week series of small groups meeting in homes to discuss Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*, 40 Days of Purpose, and the follow-up study, 40 Days of Community. Christ Church went from three small

⁹⁵⁹ Three questions used to measure this include: (1) "How much time do you spend per week (excluding formal church meetings and activities) with friends from church?" This received a score of 51, the highest score of these three questions. (2) "How often have you been invited by church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?" This received a score of 40. (3) "How often have you invited church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?" This received a score of 39. H. Carl Shank, *Christ Church: Church Health Diagnostic Report* (Chambersburg, PA: by the author, 2005), 22.

groups to fifteen groups meeting in various homes in the fall of 2003. The follow-up study witnessed nine home groups meeting in the fall of 2004. Using a video taped teaching session was enough of an assist to encourage formerly reluctant leaders to facilitate a small group. These recently successful experiences in a new venue of home groups provided a promising setting to launch this project studying *A Church After God's Own Heart*.

Implementation of the Project

Because no biblical rationale for the eight quality characteristics was available from Natural Church Development,⁹⁶⁰ this researcher investigated the biblical and theological underpinnings of each of the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and presented them to the congregation in a book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*, which is included in the appendix. Under the same cover there is a small group study guide and leaders' guide for each of the eight chapters. These books were printed and distributed to every parishioner on Sunday, January 9, 2005.

The preaching and small group sessions were conducted for eight weeks, from Sunday, January 16, 2005 through Friday, March 11, 2005. A newsletter article was written by the pastor to introduce the congregation to the biblical

⁹⁶⁰ Christian's Schwarz's first book, *The ABC's of Natural Church Development*, is a brief primer on the eight quality characteristics. This is intended to be an introduction for laity to comprehend in a concise, readable way the essence of Natural Church Development and the eight quality characteristics. The difficulty encountered by this writer in the setting of this case study stems from the fact that Schwarz does not provide any scripture reference until page 20 of this 28 page booklet. Some members perceived Schwarz's reticence to include Biblical references as due to Natural Church Development lacking Biblical merit. Christian A. Schwarz, *The ABC's of Natural Church Development*, trans. Erich Baumgartner (Barrien Springs, MI: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

teaching on church health. Each week before these small groups met, the Sunday morning message from the pulpit was presented on the topic of the week, based on a key Scripture text. Small groups met in ten different homes to discuss the implications of the information shared in a setting of fellowship, trust, Bible study, and prayer.

Small group facilitators were recruited from the pool of *Purpose Driven Life* facilitators, with most of them agreeing to lead small groups, even without a video-taped teaching session. A pilot group of four facilitators met with this writer in August through September, 2004 to field test the chapters and study questions prior to a final printing.

Host homes and refreshment providers were also enlisted. Both are important to stimulate relational connections, especially after the formal session is completed, in order to enhance the loving relationships situation in this congregation.

Sign up lists were posted for parishioners to choose a small group. Facilitators and hosts were encouraged to personally invite parishioners from their *Purpose Driven* groups as well as expand their outreach to others who had not previously experienced a small group earlier. Announcements of meetings and invitations to participate were made from the pulpit and in the newsletter and weekly bulletin.

Preparation for the Project

The success of this project required diligent preparation in four areas. The first area was providing sound biblical theology that addressed the proposed

changes. The second area was securing leadership support to carry out the small group dimension necessary to expose members to the biblical theology. The third area was achieving congregational participation. The fourth area was development of a testing instrument that would measure any change.

Sound Biblical Theology

Members of the Natural Church Development implementation team and church council read Schwarz's *ABCs of Natural Church Development*, a concise overview of the eight quality characteristics of healthy churches worldwide as determined by Natural Church Development. As these leaders prayed, studied Scripture together and discerned God's leading while considering the church's situation, there was consensus among the leadership to implement changes that emerged from this process. The issue came clear to the leadership that the urgent situation was not the decline in worship attendance, but rather the failure of Christ Church to disciple to maturity those who were drawn to the church and to faith in Jesus Christ. Recognizing the Lord's Commission to "make disciples," the leadership was committed to lead the church in more deliberate and comprehensive discipleship endeavors.

When several influential members outside the leadership team resisted this initiative, it became clear to this writer that the larger congregation needed to not only hear and consider the recommended changes being proposed, but to also experience the spiritual dynamic of shared prayer, Bible study and fellowship to

see for themselves the biblical and theological imperative that the leadership team recognized.

This writer began searching the Scriptures associated with each of the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development. First, this writer sought to verify if these quality characteristics were consistent with God's revealed Word and will for His church. Second, this writer investigated the various Scriptural teachings and applications associated with each characteristic. Third, theological texts were consulted, especially Calvin and theologians writing from a Reformed perspective.⁹⁶¹ Fourth, popular Christian writers were read for their insights into each characteristic. Fifth, study questions were compiled to help lead participants to consider profoundly the implications of God's Word for their lives personally and their church life corporately.

Securing Leadership

Small group facilitators were recruited from the pool of *Purpose Driven Life* facilitators, with most of them agreeing to lead small groups. A pilot group of four small group facilitators met with this writer in August and September, 2004. The purpose of the pilot group was to determine if the teaching in the book was clear, faithful to Scripture, helpful to the congregation, and what study questions would expedite the most fruitful discussion and inspire appropriate action. A leader's guide was developed and included in the book based on these pilot group sessions.

⁹⁶¹ Christ Church comes from a German Reformed heritage.

Due to other demands in the church calendar, formal meetings with small group facilitators did not take place until January, 2005. This was a minimal timeframe for those who did not participate in the pilot study. The pastor offered to meet with facilitators weekly to brief them on the next week's session. Only three of the ten facilitators actually attended more than two of these sessions.

Host homes and refreshment providers were also enlisted. Both are important to stimulate relational connections, especially after the formal session is completed, in order to enhance the loving relationships situation in this congregation. Providing opportunity for parishioners to share their insights into the Scripture during the session, but also to share their opinions and their feelings during and after the session, as well as developing rapport with one or more group participants to be able to share any problems or issues weighing heavy upon them in a safe, supportive environment addresses several key aspects contributing to the church's low loving relationship score.⁹⁶²

Congregational Participation

Home groups were chosen as the format to expose parishioners to the theological underpinnings of Natural Church Development for four reasons. First, in addition to the cognitive presentation of information, which is also accomplished through preaching, a newsletter article and reading the book

⁹⁶² Three questions used to measure this are: (1) "When someone in the church has a different opinion from me, I prefer to be silent rather than endanger peace." This received a score of 37, the lowest score of these three questions. (2) "I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings." This received a score of 47. (3) "In our church it is possible to talk with other people about feelings and problems." This received the highest score in this category, 59. H. Carl Shank, *Christ Church: Church Health Diagnostic Report* (Chambersburg, PA: by the author, 2005), 22.

independently, the cognitive presentation by the small group facilitator reinforces the information with participants by providing yet another exposure to it.⁹⁶³

Second, small groups provide a setting where basic concepts are learned along with the action necessary to apply these concepts to real life situations. Small groups provide immediate feedback and reinforcement through praise, approval, encouragement and attention as concepts are discussed and applied in a supportive environment.⁹⁶⁴ Enthusiasm can be contagious. Assignments between group meetings are strategic opportunities to enable participants to transfer concepts to daily life applications.⁹⁶⁵

A third benefit of having parishioners meet in one another's homes is that this enabled parishioners to develop relationships with other members outside of Sunday morning.

Fourth, beyond human interaction, the work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any fruitful study of the Scriptures.⁹⁶⁶ When believers gather together, they collectively benefit from the many different spiritual gifts present, "with a far fuller and richer treasure of heavenly wisdom than each one separately."⁹⁶⁷

Home groups were formed utilizing sign up sheets, personal invitations and announcements from the pulpit, in the bulletin and in the newsletter. Facilitators and hosts were encouraged to personally invite parishioners from their *Purpose Driven* groups as well as expand their outreach to others who had not

⁹⁶³ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers* 107.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid, 109-110.

⁹⁶⁶ John Calvin said, "For even if [scripture] wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 80.

⁹⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.11 v 2, 1159-1160.

previously experienced a small group earlier. The pastor's devotional page in the January newsletter, another newsletter page outlining the eight week's topics and key Scripture for each, as well as the Sunday message on January 9, 2005, the week before the groups began meeting, were utilized to introduce the series.

Development of the Testing Instrument

A pre-test was devised by this researcher and administered before services on Sunday, January 9, 2005, one week prior to implementing the project. A copy of the pre-test and results can be found in the appendix. With experience in statistics and in conducting empirical studies as an undergraduate student at the Pennsylvania State University, this researcher reviewed literature in the field, consulted numerous authorities in the field of statistics and empirical research, and devised a pre-test for the congregation. The pre-test was designed to assess the respondent's familiarity with the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and to determine parishioners' willingness to implement recommended changes. The purpose of the pre-test is to establish an empirical base of comparison prior to introducing the project variables in order to measure any change attributable to the introduction of those variables with the post-test. These pre-test questions and format formed the basis for devising the post-test.

The post-test was devised by Bryan C. Auday, Ph.D., the chair of the Psychology Department at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts. Dr. Auday is also a recognized statistical consultant chosen to introduce the Doctor of Ministry students at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to research methods

suitable for doctoral level thesis research. Dr. Auday is well qualified as a statistical consultant, having earned his B.A. from Biola University, his M.A. California State University, Los Angeles, and his Ph.D. from Colorado State University.

Because the pre-test responses were not numbered, there was no reliable way to compare pre-test results with post-test results. Dr. Auday also was able to frame the post-test questions with greater insight to more precisely measure the desired criteria. Therefore, the pre-test results were disregarded. Aware of this situation from the outset, Dr. Auday designed the post-test to measure changes in respondents' willingness to implement change based on exposure to biblical theology for recommended changes. Reported changes are more subjective than observed changes, therefore are not as reliable. However, under the circumstances, relying on reported changes was the best option available. A copy of the post-test can be found in the appendix.

The post-test was administered in June, 2005. This three month gap from the conclusion of congregational exposure to the biblical instruction during the project was deliberate in order to assess the more enduring impact of the project. The returned questionnaires were each numbered, with the responses entered by this researcher into a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet. These results were forwarded to Dr. Auday who utilized a computer program to analyze the results noting frequencies, correlations, cross-tabulations, and T-Test. The most significant findings are included in the chapter titled Results.

Application of the Project

The following is a description of the actual steps taken to implement the project at Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA. Recruitment of facilitators and hosts was detailed earlier in this chapter and will not be repeated here. This section will describe the actual process of exposure to biblical theology that took place week-to-week in sermons and small group sessions as the project was implemented.

The preaching and small group sessions were conducted for eight weeks, from Sunday, January 16, 2005 through Friday, March 11, 2005. An introductory message preached on Sunday, January 9, 2005 prepared the congregation for the coming series. A January, 2005 newsletter article written by the pastor to introduce the congregation to the biblical teaching on church health is included in the appendix. Each week before these small groups met, the Sunday morning message from the pulpit was presented on the topic of the week, based on a key Scripture text. Small groups of 6-16 people each met in ten different homes to discuss the implications of the information shared in a setting of fellowship, trust, Bible study, and prayer.

Introductory Week

A copy of the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart*, hereafter referred to as the book, was placed in the mailbox of every member and regular worshipper prior to services on Sunday, January 9, 2005. Additional books were available on a table in the narthex for others interested.

In light of the congregation's loving relationships minimum factor, the message introduced the topic of church health by focusing on biblical community as presented in Ephesians 2:1-22. The chapter presents the notion of "death" in a life without Christ,⁹⁶⁸ God's redeeming grace in Christ,⁹⁶⁹ and the far reaches of unity believers enjoy with saints through the ages, including one's present community of faith.⁹⁷⁰ The pastor developed these three points, illustrating the last point with a connection to the current study, observing that small groups are a contemporary approximation of Jesus' discipleship ministry. In that message, the pastor observed, "In the process of sharing meals and sharing life together, the truths of God's word sunk into the hearts and lives of these disciples in a more authentic way than simply reading and learning by rote."⁹⁷¹

Week One: Empowering Leadership

The Sunday morning message on January 16, 2005 presented empowering leadership through the ministry of Jesus. Jesus empowered the Twelve and sent them out to minister.⁹⁷² He soon had 72 more equipped to serve (Luke 10). Jesus modeled empowering leadership⁹⁷³ and servant leadership.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁶⁸ Eph. 2:1-3.

⁹⁶⁹ Eph. 2:4-10.

⁹⁷⁰ Eph. 2:19-22.

⁹⁷¹ David Mark Meckley, "A Life-Giving Church." Sermon preached at Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA 9 January 2005.

⁹⁷² Lk. 9.

⁹⁷³ Lk. 9, 10.

⁹⁷⁴ Lk. 22:27.

The empowering leadership chapter in the book covers six major points:

- (1) the character of empowering leadership,⁹⁷⁵ (2) servant leadership as taught⁹⁷⁶ and modeled⁹⁷⁷ by Jesus, (3) leadership is a spiritual gift⁹⁷⁸ often unrecognized,⁹⁷⁹
- (4) the Call of God on a leader, (5) discipleship is empowering leadership,⁹⁸⁰ and
- (6) Holy Spirit empowerment of leaders.⁹⁸¹

The small group study guide leads the participants in an exploration of the imperative of Godly character of leaders, and of oneself as a disciple of Jesus. The importance of safeguarding one's character and Jesus' developing character in a fallen leader (Peter) in John 21:15-19 is presented. The biblical account of delegation of responsibility to those with the Holy Spirit and wisdom in Acts 6:1-7 provides opportunity to learn these biblical principles and apply them to one's setting.

Week 2: Gift-based Ministry

The Sunday message on January 23, 2005 addressed the topic of ministry according to one's spiritual gift based on Romans 12.

The chapter in the book relies heavily on 1 Corinthians 12, presenting the following points: (1) God gives unique gifts to redeemed believers,⁹⁸² (2) serving

⁹⁷⁵ 2 Tim. 2:2.

⁹⁷⁶ Matt. 23:11-12.

⁹⁷⁷ John 13.

⁹⁷⁸ Rom. 12:8.

⁹⁷⁹ 1 Sam. 16:11-13

⁹⁸⁰ John 8:31, 13:34-35, 15:5-8, et. al.

⁹⁸¹ Acts 2, 7, 13, and Rom. 8.

⁹⁸² 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

out of our gift is a way to live by the Spirit rather than one's own strength,⁹⁸³ (3) inadequate and unqualified are the people God Spiritually gifts and uses in Kingdom ministry,⁹⁸⁴ (4) gifts are given to build up the church,⁹⁸⁵ (5) believers are interdependent upon each other in their gift-based ministry.⁹⁸⁶

The small group experience is designed to help people discover their spiritual gift by dividing their group into triads for more personal discussion. After reviewing a summary of gifts listed in the Bible, the entire group gathers to affirm each individual and the strengths and gifts perceived in each person. Further study in 1 Cor. 12 probes the importance of using one's gift to build up the Body and to mentor others.

Week 3: Passionate Spirituality

The Sunday message on January 30, 2005 addressed the topic of loving God passionately. The *Shema* and verses following in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 were the text of that message. The all-consuming love for God that involves all one's heart, soul and strength means believers are passionate about God.⁹⁸⁷ Believers passionately share their faith with the next generation.⁹⁸⁸ Right doctrine is essential. However, the church in Ephesus held to sound doctrine, yet was reprimanded because they lost their passion, or first love.⁹⁸⁹

⁹⁸³ 1 Cor. 12:7.

⁹⁸⁴ 1 Cor. 12:15-16.

⁹⁸⁵ 1 Cor. 12:7.

⁹⁸⁶ 1 Cor. 12:21-31.

⁹⁸⁷ Dt. 6:4-6.

⁹⁸⁸ Dt. 6:7-9.

⁹⁸⁹ Rev. 2:1-5.

The chapter in the book on passionate spirituality develops the aspect of a believer's personal relationship with God in comparison to a marriage.⁹⁹⁰ Such an intimate relationship will manifest obedient living, worship of God and love for others. This personal relationship is known as abiding in Christ⁹⁹¹ and living in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹² Temptation is no longer seen in a detached way as breaking a law but now carries with it the relational component of breaking God's heart.

The purpose of the small group study is to help participants discover the necessity of spiritual passion and to develop a more passionate relationship with Christ personally as well as to offer insight and motivation for participants to take action to help their congregation develop a more passionate spirituality. The small group study asked participants about their personal passions and how they can grow in their passion for God.⁹⁹³ A seven point scale asks participants to rate the temperature of their love relationship with Jesus, from ice cold to red hot. Turning the page, the next question asks what Jesus thinks of lukewarm.⁹⁹⁴ After examining personal spiritual disciplines, the final question asks the group how to raise the spiritual passion in their church.

Week 4: Functional Structures

The Sunday message on February 6, 2005 addressed the topic functional structures. The pastor's introduction highlighted the inspiring worship experience

⁹⁹⁰ Eph. 5:21-32.

⁹⁹¹ Jn. 15, 17.

⁹⁹² Gal. 5:16-26.

⁹⁹³ Mk. 12:30-31.

⁹⁹⁴ Rev. 2:1-5.

that ended the previous week's service on the topic of spiritual passion, observing the incongruity of such passionate worship followed by a congregational meeting. The point was developed that abiding in Christ, living by the Holy Spirit takes us from inspiring worship to Spirit-empowered service, even mundane, administrative or janitorial service. Fruitful service for Christ requires functional structures in order to accomplish what God requires of His church. The growth of the church and its applying necessary structure was developed from Christ's vision in Acts 1:8, to dramatic church growth,⁹⁹⁵ addressing issues in the church,⁹⁹⁶ leaders taking on expanding responsibility,⁹⁹⁷ and increasingly complex issues as the church's ministry expands.⁹⁹⁸

The chapter in the book shows the orderly universe God designed and how believers in the church of Jesus Christ must likewise work interdependently, following a common vision, in order to accomplish God's will.⁹⁹⁹ One never outgrows one's responsibility to live fruitfully for Jesus. A healthy Body of believers will encourage one another to spiritual maturity and fruitful ministry.¹⁰⁰⁰ Holy Spirit empowerment is essential to church structure. The Spirit's presence does not eliminate the need for planning or structure, nor does the Spirit's presence make a given procedure sacred, never to be improved upon. Structures, unlike doctrine, can change.

⁹⁹⁵ Ac. 2.

⁹⁹⁶ Ac. 6:1-7.

⁹⁹⁷ Ac. 8:26-40.

⁹⁹⁸ Ac. 15.

⁹⁹⁹ Phil. 2:1-4.

¹⁰⁰⁰ 1 Thes. 5:11; Col. 1:28.

The author received numerous comments about this chapter as being especially “deep.” Upon further inquiry, the author realized this chapter lacked sufficient organization and clarity in order to be easily understood. This chapter has since been rewritten.

The purpose of the functional structures small group session is to help participants understand the purpose of the church and to motivate them to take responsibility for their church’s effectiveness in fulfilling its distinctive role in the Kingdom of God. Like the individual entrusted with a single talent learned, one is accountable, not for the amount or quality of what one received, but for what one does with what one has.¹⁰⁰¹

Week 5: Inspiring Worship

The Sunday message on February 13, 2005 addressed the topic inspiring worship. Using Psalm 96 as the text, verse 8 begins, “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name.” The pastor expounded on aspects of God’s working and nature for which believers rightly glorify Him. The offering we bring¹⁰⁰² is not only monetary, but “whole-self worship”.¹⁰⁰³ Whole-self worship is a lifestyle that involves one’s entire being, including repentance,¹⁰⁰⁴ evangelism,¹⁰⁰⁵ and submission to God,¹⁰⁰⁶ offering to Him the glory due His name.

¹⁰⁰¹ Matt. 25:14-30.

¹⁰⁰² Ps. 96:8.

¹⁰⁰³ Ps. 96:9a.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ps. 96:9b.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ps. 96:10a.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ps. 96:10b-13.

The chapter in the book on inspiring worship asserts the true focus of worship is God. Inspiring worship is not merely entertaining but connects with those who worship “in spirit and in truth”¹⁰⁰⁷ in life-transforming ways. Worshipping God is a lifestyle of yielding to God’s Lordship and His ways, including keeping the Sabbath. Wise, Spirit-anointed living evokes music from one’s heart.¹⁰⁰⁸ Preparation for public worship is essential, including right relationships with others,¹⁰⁰⁹ a proper attitude, including a grateful heart¹⁰¹⁰ in order to encounter God who is holy, exalted, and set apart. Worship includes silence, the reading and proclamation of God’s Word, prayer, and may include the sacraments.

The purpose of the small group session is to help participants deepen their personal preparation for worship and to discover ways to enter into whole-self worship. biblical illustrations of whole-self worship by a woman who lived a sinful life¹⁰¹¹ and how she was misunderstood by others invites participants to ponder what is excessive and what is appropriate expression of one’s whole self in worship to God’s amazing grace. Other incidents in John 12:1-8 and Jesus’ experience of whole-self worship in the Garden are included.¹⁰¹²

¹⁰⁰⁷ Jn. 4:24.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Eph. 5:18-19.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Mt. 5:23-24.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ps. 100:4.

¹⁰¹¹ Lk. 7.

¹⁰¹² Mt. 26:36-46.

Week 6: Holistic Small Groups

The Sunday message on February 20, 2005 addressed the topic of holistic small groups using the Scripture text John 15:9-15. The pastor then contrasted love-generated Christianity with duty-based Christianity.¹⁰¹³ Obedience is not dutiful, but an expression of remaining in the Father's love.¹⁰¹⁴ Jesus is speaking to 12 very different individuals He chose to be with Him for instruction, fellowship, and accountability. Jesus expands His command to "Love each other as I have loved you".¹⁰¹⁵ Such love shuns no sacrifice¹⁰¹⁶ and shares every spiritual truth.¹⁰¹⁷ The pastor asked the congregation to consider who in their Christian life they are able to relate to with such spiritual intimacy. Small groups provide a forum to not simply lead people to faith, but disciple them to maturity in Christ.¹⁰¹⁸

The chapter in the book on holistic small groups defines holistic groups as places where people can experience biblical instruction and application to everyday life in a safe, caring community. Holistic means discipling the whole person to obedient faith.¹⁰¹⁹ As the early church practiced such discipleship,¹⁰²⁰ "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved".¹⁰²¹ Members

¹⁰¹³ Jn. 15:9.

¹⁰¹⁴ Jn. 15:10.

¹⁰¹⁵ Jn. 15:12.

¹⁰¹⁶ Jn. 15:12-14.

¹⁰¹⁷ Jn. 15:15.

¹⁰¹⁸ Col. 1:28.

¹⁰¹⁹ Col. 1:27-29; Eph. 4:12-13.

¹⁰²⁰ Ac. 2:42.

¹⁰²¹ Ac. 2:27b.

need to commit to such holistic fellowship for the church to grow and mature in Christ's love.¹⁰²²

The purpose of the small group session is to help participants understand the purpose and value of holistic small groups and to consider initiating holistic small groups or make their existing groups more holistic. Using Col. 1:28, Eph. 4:11-13 and Matt. 28:18-20, the group is encouraged to consider what could make their small group experience a more disciple-maturing experience.

Week 7: Need-oriented Evangelism

The Sunday message on February 27, 2005 addressed the topic of need-oriented evangelism. Using Matthew 9:5-8 as an introduction, the pastor observed how Jesus addressed felt needs while pressing them to recognize their more profound need for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The message then developed the progression of Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well in John 4. Jesus addressed her need for association,¹⁰²³ was confronted with her suspicion, a reality all too common today,¹⁰²⁴ then broaches her deeper need.¹⁰²⁵ Afterward, Jesus speaks to His disciples, then and now, showing how vital such evangelistic outreach is to one's spiritual life.¹⁰²⁶

The chapter in the book on need-oriented evangelism opens, "The Gospel Jesus shared was more than words. Jesus embodied the Gospel's compassion as

¹⁰²² Eph. 4:15.

¹⁰²³ Jn. 4:7.

¹⁰²⁴ Jn. 4:9.

¹⁰²⁵ Jn. 4:17-18.

¹⁰²⁶ Jn. 4:34-38.

he reached out to those in need. Jesus responded to their need by healing the sick,¹⁰²⁷ giving sight to the blind,¹⁰²⁸ feeding the hungry,¹⁰²⁹ and teaching the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd.^{1030 1031} Jesus went into the community to meet people and see their lives transformed. Believers permeate contemporary society and must be open to how God can use them to address others' needs so they can find Christ who alone can meet their deepest need. Both Christians and non-believers commonly agree they are uncomfortable with witnessing. Learning to ask thoughtful questions can open guarded people to talk about spiritual issues, eventually leading to opportunities to share Christ in an authentic way. Effective evangelism does not focus on the believer's need to witness, but considers the recipient's needs and how the Gospel addresses those needs.

The purpose of the small group session is to focus participants on the needs of acquaintances without Christ and way to personally address those needs. Participants are asked to consider the needs in their community and their own faith pilgrimage in order to sensitize them to needs and to identify with those without Christ by reflecting on their own spiritual journey to faith. Participants are asked to pray and list specific individuals who need Christ. After reading Matt. 9:2-8, participants consider needs these individuals may have and ways to

¹⁰²⁷ Mt. 14:14, Mk. 1:41.

¹⁰²⁸ Mt 20:34.

¹⁰²⁹ Mt.14:21; 15:32.

¹⁰³⁰ David Mark Meckley, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church* (Beaver Springs, PA: by the author, 2005), 82.

¹⁰³¹ Mk. 6:34.

reach out to them in their need. Participants are asked to state the essence of the Gospel of salvation in their own words.

Week 8: Loving Relationships

The Sunday message on March 6, 2005 addressed the topic of loving relationships. The Scripture text was 1 Peter 4:8, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” The pastor expanded on this verse, noting the priority of such love,¹⁰³² the depth of such love,¹⁰³³ and the way of love and forgiveness.¹⁰³⁴

The chapter in the book on loving relationships notes that Jesus sets the ultimate standard for loving others when He said, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [qvb://0/anchor/35](#) By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”¹⁰³⁵ The church needs to create opportunities for relationships to develop. Bible study in the book of Acts was a group experience as believers listened personally to the apostles’ teaching.¹⁰³⁶ True community grows out of devoted discipleship where God’s Word is learned and lived out.¹⁰³⁷ Loving community includes transparency and honest confrontation.¹⁰³⁸

The purpose of the small group session is to motivate participants to deepen their loving relationships and to instill in their congregation a loving

¹⁰³² Matt. 5:23-24.

¹⁰³³ Jn. 13:34-35.

¹⁰³⁴ Lk. 17:3-4; Eph. 4:30-32.

¹⁰³⁵ Jn. 13:34-35.

¹⁰³⁶ Ac. 2:42.

¹⁰³⁷ Ac. 2:42-47; 4:32-35.

¹⁰³⁸ Matt. 7:5, 18:15-17; 1 Ptr. 4:8.

climate that embraces everyone and integrates newcomers into the church family.

Matt. 22:37-40 provides the context for participants to consider what love means to them and how they and their church can better show love to others. Colossians 3:12-14 identifies eight virtues of loving relationships for individuals to consider as they endeavor to grow in love toward others. A concluding study on Eph. 4:15 invites participants to probe the painful but beneficial dimensions of speaking the truth in love, asking why and how to do so more effectively.

One small group, led by a vocal critic of Natural Church Development's assessment of Christ Church's minimum factor, refused to acknowledge loving relationships was a problem requiring attention. However, this individual reported that this small group met for over three hours when discussing loving relationships, twice the agreed timeframe. Several in this group remarked this was the best chapter of the entire study.

This resistant facilitator did not appear to grasp the implications of the group's eagerness to thoroughly explore this topic. It appears to this writer that the group was finding ways to express a need and find help in God's Word and through this group experience. Whether participants are able to admit they have a need or not, when real help is offered, it can be irresistible.

Measurement Design

The measurement instrument was designed to test the thesis, which states: Increased exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes will increase parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes.

The research measurement instrument was designed to identify two crucial characteristics: (1) exposure to biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes and (2) any change in parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes.

Purpose of the Measurement

The purpose of the measurement is to determine if there exists a link between exposure to biblical theology related to recommended changes as presented in the book and through small group participation, and willingness to become involved in implementing proposed changes.

Design of the Measurement

To test the primary thesis, five questions were designed to determine if there exists a link between exposure to biblical theology related to recommended changes as presented in the book and small group participation, and willingness to become involved in implementing proposed changes. Two of those questions assessed exposure to biblical theology. The other three questions assessed different facets of participation in the church to implement those changes.

Theological Exposure

The two questions designed to assess exposure to biblical theology are listed below with the number signifying the order each question was listed on the survey. At the time the project was administered, the book distributed bore the name, *What the Bible Says About Church Health*. Consequently, that is the name listed on the survey. However, since that time, the title and contents have been

updated. *What the Bible Says About Church Health* is the original issue of the book elsewhere referred to as *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*. The questions state:

3. Since January, I participated in a Church Health small group: 7-8 times; 5-6 times; 3-4 times; 1-2 times; Not at all.
4. How much of the book *What The Bible Says About Church Health* have you read? 7-8 chapters; 5-6 chapters; 3-4 chapters; 1-2 chapters; None.

Participation in the Church

The other three questions assess different facets of participation in the church to implement recommended changes. These questions state:

20. Over the past 5 months, has there been a change in your willingness to volunteer or accept an invitation to become more involved at the church? Yes, I feel more willing to become involved; There has been no change in my willingness to become more involved; I feel less willing to become more involved.

The two other questions designed to test the thesis utilize a Likert scale with five responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. They read as follows:

18. I would participate in the process of examining factors contributing to our lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that area of church life.

19. I would participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve our lowest church health score.

Proving the Thesis

To prove the primary thesis, a significant statistical correlation would have to exist between the questions assessing exposure to biblical theology (questions 3 and 4), and the questions assessing an increase in one's willingness to become involved in the church and implementing change (questions 18, 19 and 20).

Of the three questions assessing involvement, the key question is question 19 which specifically addresses the process of implementing recommended changes. This question expresses its intent using the words directly from the thesis statement, which reads: Increased exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes will increase parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes.

Question 18 addresses a critical aspect of the process of implementing change by enlisting willingness to participate in the prayer and strategizing steps to determine what specific changes to recommend. This researcher recognizes this strategizing step is not the same as actually implementing proposed changes. This question is included in deference to the culture of this congregation that values input in such a process.

Question 20 is the least relevant to the precise intent of the thesis statement. Question 20 asks for any change in one's willingness to become involved in the church. This question does not specify implementing changes.

This question assesses a more general willingness to become involved in the life of the church. This question is included to assess one's general willingness to be involved in the church, a telling indicator for a church undergoing self-assessment and contemplating recommended changes.

Other Survey Questions Explained

Additional questions were included in the survey to determine if other significant correlations could be identified. Those questions include:

1. Since January, I have participated in a Sunday School class: Every week; About two times each month; About once a month; A few times; Never.
2. Since January, I have participated in Worship services: Every week; About two times each month; Once a month; A few times; Never.

The above questions were used to determine frequency of participation in Sunday school and worship to see if there was an identifiable correlation between degree of participation and willingness to implement recommended changes.

Two additional questions were included in the survey to determine the extent of the respondent's involvement beyond Sunday morning. Those questions are:

5. In the past two years, what other small groups have you participated in? (*check all that apply*): 40 Days of Purpose; 40 Days of Community; Bible study; Prayer group; Other.

6. In the past two years, I have served on (*check all that apply*): Affiliation committee; Strategic planning; Council; Natural Church Development Implementation Team.

Another question simply asked:

27. Are you currently serving the church in some capacity? Yes; No.

These preceding five questions were included in the survey to determine if the degree of a parishioner's involvement provided a significant correlation with their willingness to participate in implementing recommended changes.

Two questions were included in the survey to see if a correlation could be demonstrated between a parishioner's attitude toward change in the church or their degree of confidence in Natural Church Development and their willingness to implement recommended changes. Those questions, using a five-point Likert scale, read:

7. I believe making changes in the way the church operates can be absolutely necessary.

8. Our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey.

Three questions were included in the survey to see if a correlation could be demonstrated between a parishioner's gender, age, or status as a member or non-member of the church and their willingness to implement recommended changes. Those questions read:

24. Gender: Female; Male.

25. Age: Under 18; 18 – 22; 23 – 29; 30 – 40; 41 – 50; 51 – 60; over 61.

26. Are you a member of this church? Yes; No.

Questions were included to assess respondents' familiarity with at least one aspect of each of the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development. These questions were designed to determine if the exposure to this information was retained by the respondents. The question assessing Need-oriented Evangelism reads:

9. I believe the Bible teaches that evangelism includes addressing people's needs.

Two questions assessing Christ Church's minimum factor, Loving relationships, read:

10. I believe the Bible teaches that believers must not bother one another with troublesome concerns or offenses.

16. I believe the Bible teaches that believers must be honest with each other, even at the risk of bringing about some conflict.

The question assessing Passionate Spirituality reads:

11. I believe the Bible teaches that one's Christian life should be joyfully contagious.

The question assessing Inspiring Worship reads:

12. I believe the Bible teaches that worship should be inspiring.

The question assessing holistic small groups reads:

13. I believe the Bible teaches that small groups should focus on applying truth to life.

The question assessing Gift-based Ministry reads:

15. I believe the Bible teaches that believers should find a ministry based on their spiritual gift.

Two questions assessing Empowering Leadership read:

14. I believe the Bible teaches that leaders are to develop other leaders.

17. I believe the Bible teaches servant leadership.

No question was included to assess Functional Structures.

Two questions were included concerning which of the two Sunday worship services the respondent attends and reason for choosing that service.

These questions were included for leadership interests unrelated to this project.

Summary

This chapter described the actual steps taken to assess whether increasing parishioners' exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended changes to improve church health is associated with an increase in their willingness to implement these recommended changes. The necessary preparations, research and procedures followed were specified and explained. A week by week summary of the content presented as exposure to biblical theology was presented. A detailed analysis of the survey instrument, the purpose for key questions related to the thesis, and the process used in implementing the survey was presented. The results of this project will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will confirm whether the project was implemented as planned. The means of measurement, a survey instrument, which was analyzed in the previous chapter, will be presented with a summary of the results of that survey and a discussion of the significance of those results.

Implementation of Project

This project was implemented as scheduled from January through March, 2005. Copies of the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church* were distributed to parishioners on January 9, 2005. The preaching and small group sessions were conducted for eight weeks, from Sunday, January 16, 2005 through Friday, March 11, 2005. The pastor's devotional page in the January newsletter, another newsletter page outlining the eight week's topics and key Scripture for each, as well as the Sunday message on January 9, 2005, the week before the groups began meeting, were utilized to introduce the series.

Means of Measurement

A pre-test and post-test method was utilized to determine empirically if there would be an observable difference in parishioners' willingness to implement recommended changes corresponding to their exposure to biblical theology.

A pre-test was devised by this researcher in consultation with several statisticians and social scientists. A pilot study was conducted at St. Paul's (Wolf's) Church in York, PA, and refinements were made to the survey instrument. The pre-test was designed to assess the respondent's familiarity with the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and to determine parishioners' willingness to implement recommended changes. The purpose of the pre-test is to establish an empirical base of comparison prior to introducing the project variables in order to measure any change attributable to the introduction of those variables with the post-test. These pre-test questions and format formed the basis for devising the post-test.

The pre-test survey was administered at Christ Church of Beaver Springs before services on Sunday, January 9, 2005, one week prior to implementing the project. This researcher then tallied the pre-test results and continued looking for access to a thorough, computerized statistical analysis for those results. Other statisticians and social scientists who were consulted were not available or able to offer the kind of analysis sought. After numerous failed attempts, due to an errant email address, this researcher was able to make contact with Dr. Bryan Auday, the chair of the Psychology Department at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts. Dr. Auday was most helpful. Dr. Auday pointed out that because

the pre-test responses were not numbered, there would be no reliable way to compare pre-test results with post-test results. Because the project by this time was fully implemented, there was no way to secure reliable pre-test information. Therefore, the pre-test results were disregarded. In light of this situation, Dr. Auday designed the post-test to measure changes in respondents' reported willingness to implement change based on exposure to biblical theology for recommended changes. Reported changes are more subjective than observed changes, therefore are not as reliable. However, under the circumstances, relying on reported changes was the best option available. A copy of the post-test can be found in the appendix.

The post-test was administered in June, 2005. This three month gap from the conclusion of congregational exposure to the biblical instruction during the project was deliberate in order to assess the more enduring impact of the project. The returned questionnaires were each numbered, with the responses entered by this researcher into a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet. These results were forwarded to Dr. Auday who utilized a computer program called SPSS to analyze the results noting frequencies, correlations, cross-tabulations, and T-Tests. The most significant findings are included later in this chapter.

Summary of Results

Pearson *r* Correlation

In this section, the researcher will present the outcomes of the post-test survey, indicating those outcomes demonstrating statistical significance. Statistical analysis is used to determine “whether the difference is large enough

that it is not likely to be due to a random, chance event.”¹⁰³⁹ The Pearson r correlation (2-tailed) was used at a confidence level of 0.05. Some results are at an even lower, more exacting confidence level of 0.01. Both 0.05 and 0.01 r correlations are not likely to be attributed to random chance, thus bear statistical significance.

Seventy-seven surveys were completed and returned. Not every respondent answered every question, which accounts for the discrepancy in some respondent totals.

Questions Used to Test the Thesis

The primary researchable questions to test this project’s thesis were designed to determine if there exists a link between exposure to biblical theology related to recommended changes as presented in the book and small group participation, and willingness to become involved in implementing proposed changes. Exposure to biblical theology was measured in two survey questions. Survey question 3 measured the frequency of participation in a Church Health small group. Survey question 4 measured the amount each respondent reach of the book, “*What The Bible Says About Church Health.*”

Three questions were used to assess respondents’ willingness to participate in implementing recommended changes. Question 19 specifically addresses the process of implementing recommended changes. This question expresses its intent using the words directly from the thesis statement, which

¹⁰³⁹ Larry VanderCreek, Hilary Bender, and Merle R. Jordon, *Research in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Qualitative Approaches* (Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1994), 55.

reads: Increased exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes will increase parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes.

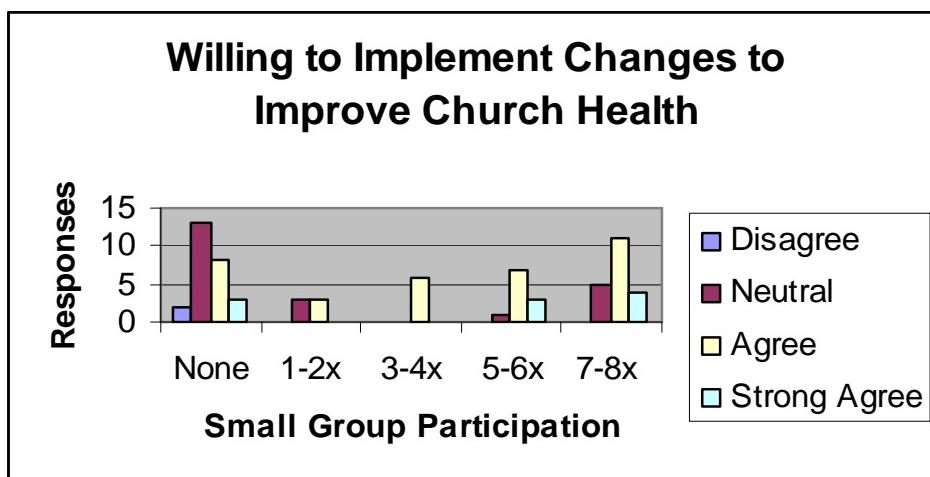
Question 18 addresses a critical aspect of the process of implementing change by enlisting willingness to participate in the prayer and strategizing steps to determine what specific changes to recommend.

Question 20 asks for any change in one's willingness to become involved in the church. This question does not specify implementing changes. This question assesses a more general willingness to become involved in the life of the church. This question is included to assess one's general willingness to be involved in the church, a telling indicator for a church undergoing self-assessment and contemplating recommended changes.

Results and Analysis Related to the Primary Thesis

Survey Questions 3, 4 & 19 Related to the Primary Thesis
3. Since January, I participated in a Church Health small group: ____ 7-8 times; ____ 5-6 times; ____ 3-4 times; ____ 1-2 times; ____ Not at all.
4. How much of the book "What The Bible Says About Church Health" have you read? ____ 7-8 chapters; ____ 5-6 chapters; ____ 3-4 chapters; ____ 1-2 chapters; ____ None.
19. I would participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve our lowest church health score. Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

To support the primary thesis, a significant statistical correlation would have to exist between those questions assessing exposure to biblical theology (questions 3 and 4), and the questions assessing an increase in one's willingness to become involved in the church and implementing change (questions 18, 19 and 20). As noted in the previous section, question 19 specifically addresses the process of implementing recommended changes. This question expresses its intent using the words directly from the thesis statement. Questions 18 and 20 offer corroborating evidence of willingness to participate in a particular aspect of assessing necessary changes (question 18) and becoming involved in the church in general (question 20).



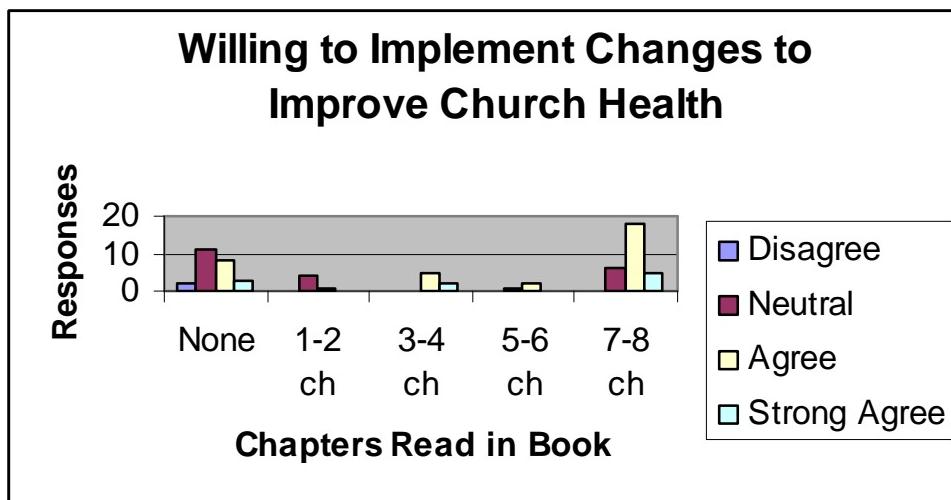
Correlating question 3, assessing the frequency of small group participation, with question 19, respondents' willingness to participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve the church's lowest health score, proved significant at the higher level of confidence (0.01), with a significance (2-tailed) of 0.004. The Pearson Correlation is 0.342, with 69 valid responses used in this correlation.

A significant statistical correlation was demonstrated between each of the questions assessing exposure to biblical theology (questions 3 and 4), and the one question (19) reporting an increase in one's willingness to implement recommended changes. These results were well beyond the higher level of confidence (0.01). This demonstrates, in this particular setting, based on this particular survey, that the thesis holds true that exposure to biblical theology correlates significantly with an increase in one's willingness to implement recommended changes.

Of those who participated in 5 or more small groups, 25 of 31 (80.6 percent) agree or strongly agree they would participate in implementing recommended changes. Six are neutral. No one expressed being unwilling to implement recommended changes. Of those who did not participate in any small group sessions, 11 of 26 (42.3 percent) agree or strongly agree they would participate in implementing recommended changes. Thirteen are neutral. Two disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of those survey respondents who participated in 1-4 small group sessions, 9 of 12 (75 percent) agree they would participate in implementing recommended changes. No one strongly agreed who participated in

four or less small group sessions. Four are neutral. Clearly, based on the responses from this congregation to this survey, the more involvement one had with a church health small group, the more likely that parishioner would be willing to implement recommended changes.

Correlating question 4, assessing the amount of the book the respondent read, with question 19, respondents' willingness to participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve the church's lowest health score, proved significant at the higher level of confidence (0.01), with a significance (2-tailed) of 0.009. The Pearson Correlation is 0.313, with 68 valid responses used in this correlation.



Of those who read 7 or more chapters of the book, 23 of 29 (79.3 percent) agree or strongly agree they would participate in implementing recommended changes. Six are neutral. No one expressed being unwilling to implement recommended changes. Of those who did not read any of the book, eleven of 24

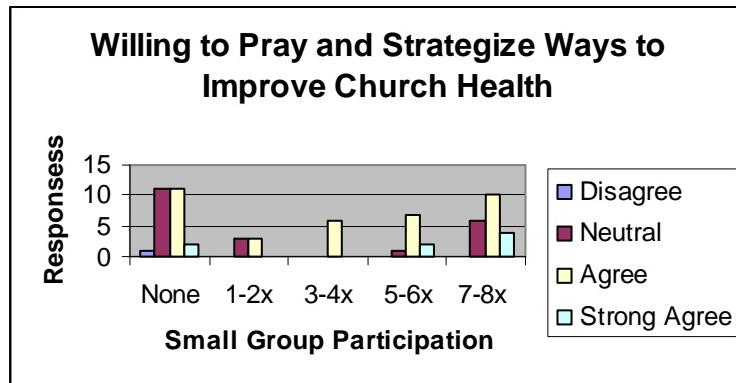
(45.8 percent) agree or strongly agree they would participate in implementing recommended changes. Eleven are neutral. Two responded they were unwilling to implement recommended changes. Of those who read 1-6 chapters of the book, 10 of 15 (66.6 percent) agree or strongly agree they would participate in implementing recommended changes. Five are neutral. No one expressed being unwilling to implement recommended changes. Clearly, based on the responses from this congregation to this survey, the more one read of the book, the more likely that parishioner would be willing to implement recommended changes.

Results and Analysis of Secondary Questions Related to the Primary Thesis

Secondary Survey Questions 18 & 20 Related to the Primary Thesis
<p>18. I would participate in the process of examining factors contributing to our lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that area of church life.</p> <p>Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree</p>
<p>20. Over the past 5 months, has there been a change in your willingness to volunteer or accept an invitation to become more involved at the church?</p> <p>— Yes, I feel more willing to become involved; — There has been no change in my willingness to become more involved — I feel less willing to become more involved</p>

A significant statistical correlation, at the 0.05 level of confidence, was demonstrated between the question assessing exposure to biblical theology through participation in a small group (question 3) and the respondent's

willingness to participate in the process of examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that score (question 18). The Pearson Correlation is 0.274, with a significance of 0.025 utilizing 67 valid responses.



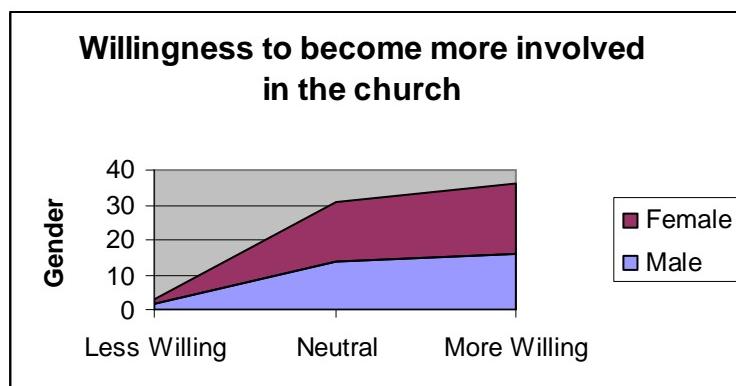
However, the correlation between the amount of the book the respondent read (question 4) with the respondent's willingness to participate in the process of examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that score (question 18), did not quite prove significant, with a score of 0.053. The Pearson Correlation is 0.239, with 66 valid responses used in this correlation.

No significant correlation was found between exposure to biblical theology, either by participation in a small group or by reading the book with the respondent's willingness to become more involved in the church in general (question 20). Correlating question 3, assessing the frequency of small group participation, with question 20, which asked for any change in one's willingness to become involved, provided a non-significant score of 0.201. The Pearson Correlation is -0.154, with 71 valid responses used in this correlation.

Correlating question 4, assessing the amount of the book the respondent read, with question 20, which asked for any change in one's willingness to become involved, provided a non-significant score of 0.433. The Pearson Correlation is -0.095, with 71 valid responses used in this correlation. This study did not find a significant correlation with this particular sample.

Observations Concerning Willingness to Become Involved

Most of the respondents to this survey indicate an increased willingness to become involved at the church. A cross-tabulation of responses to question 24, listing the respondent's gender and question 20, asking of any change in one's willingness to become involved, shows an outcome worthy of note. Over 50 percent of female (52.6 percent) and exactly 50 percent of male parishioners responding indicate they are more willing to become involved. Thirty six of the seventy respondents (51.4 percent) indicate an increased willingness to become involved: 20 of 36 females; 16 of 32 males.

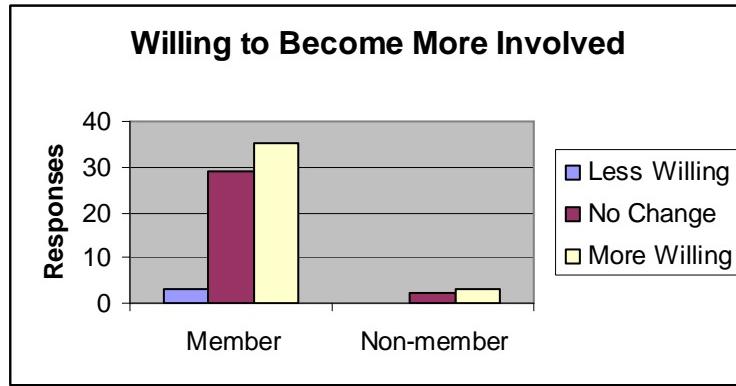


A cross-tabulation between question 3, assessing small group participation with question 20, asking of any change in one's willingness to become involved reveal three of the respondents indicating they are less willing to become

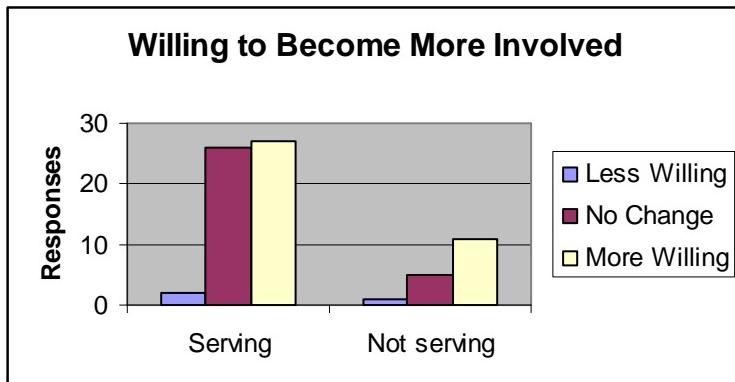
involved. All three participated in a small group at least one time. One participated in a small group 5-6 times. Thirty-seven respondents report they are more willing to become involved. Those attending five or more small group sessions are actually less likely to be more willing to become involved (14 of 31) than those who attended fewer small group sessions (23 of 33). A remarkable difference was found with those who did not participate in any small group sessions. Seventeen such persons report they are more willing to become involved. This suggests other factors are contributing to these individuals' willingness to become more involved. The remaining 31 respondents report no change in their willingness to become involved. Ten of those did not participate in any small group. The thirteen who attended 7-8 small group sessions are the largest segment reporting no change in their willingness to become involved.

Further evidence that other factors are contributing to respondents' increased willingness to become involved includes the following:

More than half of these responding report an increase in their willingness to become involved. Three of five (60 percent) non-members report an increase in their willingness to become involved. Thirty-five of 67 (52.2 percent) members report an increase in their willingness to become involved.



Eleven of 17 (64.7 percent) respondents not serving in the church currently report an increase in their willingness to become involved. Twenty-seven of 55 (49 percent) respondents who are currently serving in the church report an increase in their willingness to become involved.



Positively, a majority of respondents express an increased willingness to become involved in the church. Negatively, in terms of this study, that increased willingness cannot be attributed to exposure to biblical theology underlying Natural Church Development's eight quality characteristics. In fact, it appears exposure to biblical theology shows a negative impact upon respondents. Three of 44 respondents (6.8 percent) who participated in small groups reported being less

willing to get involved in the church. Likewise, 3 of 46 (6.5 percent) who read at least part of the book reported being less willing to get involved in the church.

A cross-tabulation of those who participated in small groups and their willingness to become involved revealed an increase in willingness among those parishioners who never participated in small groups. Seventeen of the 27 respondents (62.9 percent) who never participated in a church health small group report they were more willing to increase their participation. Only seven of the 20 survey respondents (35 percent) who participated in every small group session report an increase in their willingness to become involved. Of those survey respondents who participated in 1-6 small group sessions, twenty of 44 (44.4 percent) report an increase in their willingness to become involved. It appears to this researcher, based on the results of this survey, that participating in more small groups is associated with being less willing to increase one's involvement in the church.

Cross-tabulation: Small Group Participation and Willingness to Increase Involvement

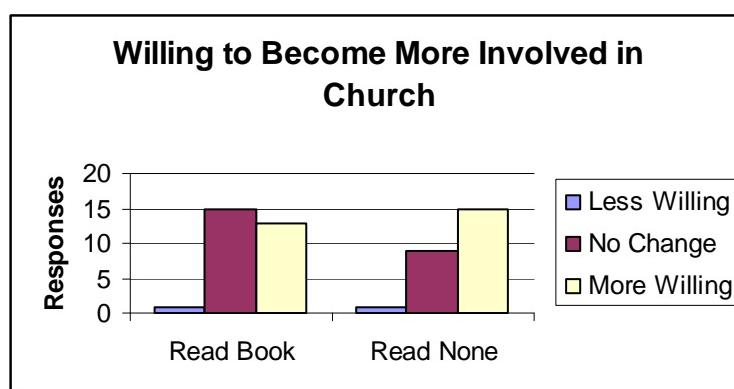
Quest. #3:	Small Group	Participation:					
Quest. #20:	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>1-2 times</u>	<u>3-4 times</u>	<u>5-6 times</u>	<u>7-8 times</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Less Willing	0	2	0	1	0	3	
No change	10	1	4	3	13	31	
More Willing	17	3	3	7	7	37	
Total	27	6	7	11	20		

A cross-tabulation of those who read the book and their willingness to become more involved in the church revealed an increase in willingness among

those parishioners who never read the book. Fifteen of the 25 respondents (60 percent) who never read the book report they were more willing to increase their participation. Only thirteen of the 29 survey respondents (44.8 percent) who read the entire book report an increase in their willingness to become involved. Of those survey respondents who read up to six chapters of the book, 22 of 46 (47.8 percent) report an increase in their willingness to become involved. It appears to this researcher, based on the results of this survey, that reading more of the book is associated with being less willing to increase one's involvement in the church.

Cross-tabulation: Read Book and Willingness to Increase Involvement

Quest. #4:	Read	Book:						
		<u>None</u>	<u>1-2 Chapters</u>	<u>3-4 Chapters</u>	<u>5-6 Chapters</u>	<u>7-8 Chapters</u>		
Quest. #20:								
Less Willing		1	0	1	0	1	3	
No change		9	4	2	1	15	31	
More Willing		15	3	4	2	13	37	
Total	25	7	7	3	29			



Other Significant Correlations

Two questions were included in the survey to see if a correlation could be demonstrated between a parishioner's attitude toward change in the church or their degree of confidence in Natural Church Development and their willingness to implement recommended changes. These two questions used a five-point Likert scale. Neither question yielded a significant correlation with questions concerning willingness to implement recommended changes. However, a significant correlation exists between the responses to these two questions. When question 7, which states, "I believe making changes in the way the church operates can be absolutely necessary," was correlated with question 8, which states, "Our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey," the Pearson Correlation scored 0.438, with a significance (2-tailed) of 0.000, with 75 valid responses.

The correlation between those who participated in a small group and those who read the book showed significance (2-tailed) of 0.000, with a Pearson Correlation of 0.659 with 73 valid responses.

Only one quality characteristic question yielded a significant result. This question was the first of two questions assessing Christ Church's minimum factor, loving relationships, which read: "I believe the Bible teaches that believers must not bother one another with troublesome concerns or offenses." Anticipating a negative response, when a T-test for equality of means was performed, a

significance level (2-tailed) of 0.050 was reached. Female respondents had a higher mean than males. No other questions returned significant results.

Observations of Responses from Those Who Read the Book

It was anticipated that those who read the book would glean from it new insights into various aspects of the quality characteristics of church health or attitudes toward change. What follows are indications that those who read the book demonstrate a higher percentage of the sought-for response, even if the percentage is less than anticipated. Twenty-nine respondents read the entire book. Twenty-six respondents did not read the book. Of those who read the entire book: (1) 82.2 percent agreed or strongly agreed that making changes in the way the church operates can be absolutely necessary. This was only nominally more than the 80.8 percent who agreed who did not read the book, (2) 100 percent of those who read the book agreed or strongly agreed that evangelism includes addressing peoples' needs, up from 92 percent of those who did not read the book, (3) 96.6 percent who read book disagreed or strongly disagreed that believers must not bother one another with troublesome concerns or offenses, up from 84.6 percent who did not read the book, (4) 96.5 percent who read the book agreed or strongly agreed that one's Christian life should be joyfully contagious, up from 92.3 percent who did not read the book.

Unanticipated outcomes of those who read the book include the following:

(1) 65.5 percent of those who read the entire book agreed or strongly agreed that our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area

based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey, down from 73.1 percent of those who did not read the book, (2) 89.6 percent who read the entire book agreed or strongly agreed that small groups should focus on applying truth to life, down from 96 percent of those who did not read the book, (3) 93.1 percent who read the entire book agreed or strongly agreed that worship should be inspiring, down from 96.1 percent who did not read the book.

Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the project and analyzed the findings of the survey instrument. The researcher sought to determine if there exists a link between exposure to biblical theology related to recommended changes as presented in the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart*, and small group participation, and parishioners' willingness to become involved in implementing proposed changes.

The findings of this project support the relationship between exposure to biblical theology related to recommended changes and an increase in parishioners' willingness to become involved in implementing proposed changes. These results will be interpreted in the next chapter. Conclusions based on these findings will be presented.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter will summarize the thesis and the project conducted in this case study and draw conclusions based on the project's research findings. First, this chapter will review the problem that prompted this project and briefly summarize the project devised to address the problem. Second, this chapter will summarize each of the chapters included in this thesis. Third, this chapter will offer conclusions and recommendations for pastors and other church leaders as well as possible research for further study.

Review of the Problem and Applied Treatment

Review of the Problem

This researcher's personal ministry context required a proactive response to the resistance posed by some parishioners to implementing recommended ecclesiastical changes. The Natural Church Development survey and

implementation guide utilized in the process of recommending changes were deemed suspect by these resistant parishioners as lacking biblical authenticity.¹⁰⁴⁰

A second reason for this project transcends this case study and its use of Natural Church Development. Resistance to ecclesiastical change is widespread.¹⁰⁴¹ This researcher asserts that responding to such resistance with sound biblical theology for the recommended changes will help church leaders motivate resistant parishioners to implement recommended changes. Sound biblical theology is also necessary to ensure the recommended changes are biblically credible and provides a necessary corrective throughout the implementation process.

Review of the Treatment

By increasing parishioners' exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes, this researcher asserts that parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes will increase. The success of this project required diligent preparation in four areas. The first area is providing

¹⁰⁴⁰ Christian Schwarz rebuts this "spiritualistic paradigm" as dualistic, neglecting that God created an orderly universe marked by observable principles. God sustains (Psalm 104:30, Job 34:13-15) the "very good" (Gen. 1:31) world He created, even since the world entered into its current fallen state. The incarnation (John 1:14) demonstrates God's commitment to work in and through His creation to redeem fallen humanity. For God to work through the church, even through programs, planning and management in a predictable way is evidence of God's sustaining Presence. Those from a "spiritualistic paradigm" only recognize the Holy Spirit working in the event of an exception to a recognized principle. See Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 90-91, 106-107.

¹⁰⁴¹ "Resistance in and of itself is neither good nor bad. It is an unconscious process of retarding or blocking the process of transformation. No group or individual can withstand unimpeded change. Resistance serves the purpose of allowing an organism to consolidate its gains as it internalizes changes it has undergone...In any living organism faced with the prospect of changing, resistance will surely be present." Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 24. Also, resistance to necessary change is implied in the observation that 85 percent of established churches in America are stagnant in membership or in decline.

sound biblical theology that addresses the proposed changes. The second area is securing leadership support to carry out the small group dimension necessary to expose members to the biblical theology. The third area is achieving congregational participation. The fourth area is development of a testing instrument that measures the desired change.

First, this researcher investigated, verified and presented in lay terms a biblical and theological rationale for each of Natural Church Development's eight quality characteristics. This resource, which is included in the appendix, was published as the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*. A series of small group Bible studies based on each chapter in the book, a concurrent series of sermons preached on each of these eight topics and newsletter articles were utilized to expose parishioners to biblical theology related to the recommended changes.

Second, small group facilitators were secured and resourced using a leaders' guide in the book and a training session. Third, the small group studies were promoted and the congregation participated by reading the book, listening to weekly sermons and engaging the small group sessions. Fourth, a reliable post-test instrument was designed and implemented to assess any correlation between exposure to biblical theology and parishioners' motivation to implement recommended changes.

Summary of Thesis Chapters

This thesis is presented in six chapters. The first chapter presents the problem that occasioned the project and the setting or context for this case study.

Theological Framework

Chapter two provides the theological framework for the thesis. Four major points will be summarized here.

First, The Word of God in Scripture and Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection are authoritative for the church's faith and practice. biblical theology is foundational to motivating ecclesiastical change. John Calvin observed, "The only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word."¹⁰⁴² This has implications for leaders hoping to motivate resistant parishioners in the midst of ecclesiastical change. The Word of God and the power of God do not rest in human ability but in the Spirit of God.¹⁰⁴³ The power of the Gospel to change lives is not dependent upon the techniques or skill of any orator, but on the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁴⁴

As a herald, the preacher focuses on capturing people's attention and enhancing their comprehension.¹⁰⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing people to faith, that is, their yielding to the message, retaining and acting upon the

¹⁰⁴² Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.8.8, 1155.

¹⁰⁴³ Zech. 4:6.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mic. 3:8; Zech. 4:6; Ac. 1:8; Rom. 1:1-5; 15: 13, 17-19; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2:1-5; Eph. 3:16-21; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Ti. 1:7. "We deny that the power of the Gospel rests in the eloquence of the preacher, the technique of the evangelist, or the persuasion of rational argument." The Committee on Evangelical Unity in the Gospel, "The Gospel Of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration," *Christianity Today* 43, no. 7 (14 June 1999): 49.

¹⁰⁴⁵ 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1-5.

message in faith.¹⁰⁴⁶ An unacceptable line is crossed when a herald presumes to take on the work of the Holy Spirit by leveraging influence on those areas that are in God's domain. While human wisdom and rhetorical skill can achieve some response from an audience, it is a response the Apostle Paul found offensive in that it discredited the power of Christ and His cross.¹⁰⁴⁷

Second, a biblical hermeneutic incorporating the bipolarity of dynamic and static dimensions in church life is presented. This framework, based on biblical principles, provides churches and church leaders a means to determine needed resources to rehabilitate areas of deficiency in order to bring their church to conformity with God's purposes.

Third, biblical illustrations of change in general as well as God-initiated change and people's resistance to divinely ordained change are presented. biblical examples of leaders coping with such resistance are also presented. Moses' prayer life is a compelling coping mechanism Scripture offers for leaders facing persistent resistance.¹⁰⁴⁸

Fourth, biblical instances of God, Jesus and people motivating change with theology are examined. For example, God motivates Peter and the early church to change their view of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan in Acts 10:1-11:18.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that theology that does not effect appropriate change in one's life is unacceptable. Jesus tells a parable of two

¹⁰⁴⁶ Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*, 247.

¹⁰⁴⁷ 1 Cor. 1:17.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ex. 15:25, 16:4, 17:4, 19:3, 33:7-34:28; Nu. 11:2, 10-23, 12:13, 14:10-35.

builders who each hear Jesus' teaching and face the same storm.¹⁰⁴⁹ The one who failed to put Jesus' teaching into practice discovered the truth James later taught that faith without works is dead.¹⁰⁵⁰

In Exodus 35, Moses shares with the people the theology of Sabbath rest.¹⁰⁵¹ Then Moses shares God's command to bring a free will offering of specific articles, including skilled craftsmen to make articles for the Tabernacle according to divine specifications.¹⁰⁵² The people responded to the extent Moses had to order them to stop, for they had more than enough to do all the work.¹⁰⁵³

Literature Review

Chapter three presents the critical issues in secular as well as ecclesiastical literature pertaining to motivating change. These will be summarized under three main points: (1) change as a natural phenomenon; (2) motivation; (3) an historical overview and summary of contemporary strategies for implementing ecclesiastical change.

First, change is a natural part of life. A person who learns, matures, creates, composes, advances, graduates, or achieves competence is typically seen as changing for the better. The Gospel is a message of radical change. The Gospel is intended to radically transform individuals who are then called by God to

¹⁰⁴⁹ Matt. 7:24-27.

¹⁰⁵⁰ James 2:17.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ex. 35:1-3

¹⁰⁵² Ex. 35:4-19.

¹⁰⁵³ Ex. 35:20-29; 36:1-7.

transform society.¹⁰⁵⁴ Resistance to change is also a natural characteristic of a healthy ecosystem.¹⁰⁵⁵

The church finds itself contending with unrelenting societal change.

Effective church leaders will equip their congregations to face up to the impact of change on the church and its implications on the spread of the Gospel.¹⁰⁵⁶

Second, the theory of motivation is discussed. People tend to be intrinsically motivated when they help to create or directly participate in the process.¹⁰⁵⁷ Churches therefore can empower ministry teams to successfully follow-through by encouraging them to develop their vision and ministry strategy within the parameters of sound biblical principles and the church's overall goals.¹⁰⁵⁸

Resistance to change can be attributed to fear, uncertainty, or a lack of ownership, which may include an inability or unwillingness to invest the time necessary for the change to be implemented.¹⁰⁵⁹ Prudent leaders are careful not to confuse reluctance with resistance. Such leaders are also alert to parishioners' many different issues that surface during a time of transition. When multiple transitions take place in a single congregation, transition fatigue, an often-overlooked factor, can lead to weariness and resistance to proposed changes.¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁴ Rom. 12:1-2; Mt. 13:33; 2 Cor. 3:18.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Senge, *The Dance of Change*, 26.

¹⁰⁵⁶ McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 14.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Drs. Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, as cited in Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 15.

¹⁰⁵⁸ McIntosh & Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 110.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 3, as cited in Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through Change*, 18. See also Woolever and Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary*, 5.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid.

Times of transition tend to jar individuals and organizations out of their traditional routine to ask afresh questions of purpose. This can be an unsettling experience for some as well as an empowering motivator for others. Those who manage a transition are wise to ask for and actively listen to participants' feelings, "questions, concerns, objections, and suggestions for implementing the change. It is always advisable to be sensitive to the self-esteem issues that typically surround change."¹⁰⁶¹ The challenge for leaders in times of transition is not to resolve conflict, but to manage, even promote healthy conflict. Parishioners will grow spiritually as they engage the diversity in the Body of Christ in a safe, honoring environment. A valuable side-effect of the transition is when parishioners recognize the beneficial insights that come from those of different perspectives.

Third, an historical overview of ecclesiastical change and a summary of contemporary strategies for implementing ecclesiastical change are presented. The North American church has changed in recent decades for many reasons less edifying than sound biblical theology. Peter Drucker sees the decline in the American liberal churches as a consequence of losing sight of their divine mandate to seek and to save the lost.¹⁰⁶² Trends and fads that attract vast numbers of seekers but compromise sound biblical theology ultimately undermine the Gospel. Re-introducing biblical theology into these churches could be the next

¹⁰⁶¹ Rosenbaum, *How to Motivate Today's Workers*, 165-173.

¹⁰⁶² Peter Drucker, "The Church in the 21st Century: New Tools for the New Paradigm," Leadership Network address, opening General Session, Tyler, TX, 19 Aug. 1991, as cited in Randy Frazee, *The Comeback Congregation: New Life for a Troubled Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 60.

domestic mission field, lest these people eventually leave these seeker churches, concluding Christianity itself lacks substance.

Conversely, endeavors to maintain the status quo can also compromise the Gospel. For example, a deliberate choice to continue the same programming as last year, may in fact be an unfaithful *change* if this once effective program now causes the congregation to isolate themselves further from those the church is called to reach for Christ.¹⁰⁶³ The church must be astute to societal trends in order to effectively communicate the gospel message.¹⁰⁶⁴ The church must also be biblically prudent in order to avoid chasing worldly fads. The core issue is not about change as much as maintaining a dynamic relationship with the Living God through prayer, Scripture study and discerning the will of God for a given situation.¹⁰⁶⁵ Assuming a given change is consistent with God's Word, the leadership then focuses upon aiding the congregation in carrying the transition all the way through to its intended purpose.

A review of contemporary strategies for implementing ecclesiastical change included the value of Natural Church Development's empirical survey as an effective alternative to self-diagnosis in order to reveal blind spots congregations may have with regards to some areas of church health. However, due to Schwarz's view of Scripture, this writer asserts that Natural Church Development would be better received in an evangelical church with

¹⁰⁶³ "If...the church is not aware of what's happening in the lives and contexts of those it is called to reach with the gospel, it might find itself becoming unfaithful to Christ's Great Commission." McIntosh and Reeves, *Thriving Churches*, 24

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid, 24-34.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid, 61-85.

supplemental resources for laity with biblical and theological rationales for the elements of church health.

Research Question and Design

Chapter four describes the actual steps taken to address the problem identified in chapter one. The purpose of this project is to increase parishioners' exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended changes to improve church health in order to determine if such exposure is associated with an increase in their willingness to implement these recommended changes. The success of this project requires diligent preparation in four areas. The first area is providing sound biblical theology that addresses the proposed changes. The second area is securing leadership support to carry out the small group dimension necessary to expose members to the biblical theology. The third area is achieving congregational participation. The fourth area is development of a testing instrument to measure any change.

First, the congregation in this case study used the recommendations of a Natural Church Development survey and implementation guide. This project was implemented as scheduled from January through March, 2005 by the senior pastor in cooperation with the leadership and parishioners of Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA. Prior to this, the senior pastor investigated the biblical and theological underpinnings of each of the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development and presented them to the congregation in a book, *A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*, which is

included in the appendix. Under the same cover there is a small group study guide and leaders' guide for each of the eight chapters. These books were printed and distributed to every parishioner on Sunday, January 9, 2005.

The preaching and small group sessions were conducted for eight weeks. A newsletter article was written by the pastor to introduce the congregation to the biblical teaching on church health. Each week before these small groups met, the Sunday morning message from the pulpit was presented on the topic of the week, based on a key Scripture text. Small groups met in ten different homes to discuss the implications of the information shared in a setting of fellowship, trust, Bible study, and prayer.

Second, small group facilitators were recruited. A pilot group of facilitators met with this writer in August through September, 2004 to field test the chapters and study questions prior to a final printing. Host homes and refreshment providers were also enlisted. Third, sign up lists were posted for parishioners to choose a small group. Facilitators and hosts were encouraged to personally invite parishioners. Announcements of meetings and invitations to participate were made from the pulpit and in the newsletter and weekly bulletin.

Fourth, the testing instrument was a post-test devised by Bryan C. Auday, Ph.D., the chair of the Psychology Department at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts. A pre-test was devised by the author and administered on January 9, 2005, prior to the start of the project. However, because the pre-test responses were not numbered, there was no reliable way to compare pre-test results with post-test results. Therefore, the pre-test results were disregarded. Aware of this

situation, Dr. Auday designed the post-test to measure changes in respondents' willingness to implement change based on exposure to biblical theology for recommended changes. Reported changes are more subjective than observed changes, therefore are not as reliable. However, under the circumstances, relying on reported changes was the best option available.

The post-test was administered in June, 2005. This three month gap from the conclusion of congregational exposure to the biblical instruction during the project was deliberate in order to assess the more enduring impact of the project. The research measurement instrument was designed to identify two crucial characteristics: (1) exposure to biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes and (2) any change in parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes. The specific questions related to the primary thesis are listed on the following table. Survey questions 3 and 4 assess exposure to biblical theology based on participation in a church health small group (question 3) and participation in reading the book (question 4). Any change in parishioners' willingness to implement recommended changes is assessed in question 19.

Survey Questions 3, 4 & 19 Related to the Primary Thesis
3. Since January, I participated in a Church Health small group: <input type="checkbox"/> 7-8 times; <input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 times; <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times; <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times; <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all.
4. How much of the book "What The Bible Says About Church Health" have you read? <input type="checkbox"/> 7-8 chapters; <input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 chapters; <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 chapters; <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 chapters; <input type="checkbox"/> None.

19. I would participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve our lowest church health score.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Question 19 uses words taken directly from the thesis statement.

Questions 18 and 20 offer corroborating evidence of willingness to participate in a particular aspect of assessing necessary changes (question 18) and becoming involved in the church in general (question 20).

Secondary Survey Questions 18 & 20 Related to the Primary Thesis

18. I would participate in the process of examining factors contributing to our lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that area of church life.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

20. Over the past 5 months, has there been a change in your willingness to volunteer or accept an invitation to become more involved at the church?

- Yes, I feel more willing to become involved;
- There has been no change in my willingness to become more involved
- I feel less willing to become more involved

Results

The fifth chapter confirms the project was implemented as planned and presents the results of the survey and a discussion of the significance of the results. The measure of success for this project would be to show an increase in parishioners' willingness to implement recommended ecclesiastical changes in

significant correlation with increased exposure to biblical theology underlying those changes.

A significant statistical correlation was demonstrated between each of the questions assessing exposure to biblical theology (questions 3 and 4), and the one question (19) reporting an increase in one's willingness to implement recommended changes. These results were well beyond the higher level of confidence (0.01). This demonstrates, in this particular setting, based on this particular survey, that the thesis holds true that exposure to biblical theology correlates significantly with an increase in one's willingness to implement recommended changes.

A significant statistical correlation, at the 0.05 level of confidence, was demonstrated between the question assessing exposure to biblical theology through participation in a small group (question 3) and the respondent's willingness to participate in the process of examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that score (question 18).

However, the correlation between the amount of the book the respondent read (question 4) with the respondent's willingness to participate in the process of examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that score (question 18), did not quite prove significant, with a score of 0.053. No significant correlation was found between one's exposure to biblical theology, either by participation in a small group or by

reading the book, with the respondent's willingness to become more involved in the church in general (question 20).

Summary and Conclusions

The sixth chapter summarizes the project and presents conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research project.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This researcher concludes that the thesis has been substantiated based on these research results. This researcher saw the need to increase parishioners' motivation to implement recommended changes due to encountered resistance. This project sought to determine if a relationship exists between exposing parishioners to the biblical theology underlying recommended changes and their willingness to implement recommended changes. The thesis states: Increased exposure to the biblical theology underlying recommended ecclesiastical changes will increase parishioners' willingness to implement the recommended changes.

Conclusions Related to the Primary Thesis

The evidence presented in chapter 5 indicates that the project did accomplish its objectives. Those parishioners exposed to biblical theology, either by participation in a small group or by reading the book, were more likely to indicate they are willing to implement recommended changes. In fact, the more group sessions respondents participated in, the more likely they were to agree or strongly agree they are willing to implement recommended changes. Those participating in fewer small group sessions were more likely to be neutral or to

disagree concerning their willingness to implement recommended changes. They were also less likely to strongly agree.

These findings are consistent with the assertion presented in the literature review that information, including biblical theology, is reinforced in settings where individuals can learn from one another's insights and experiences, such as in a small group.¹⁰⁶⁶ Even beyond the human benefits of camaraderie, interdependence, momentum and creative synergy is the work of the Holy Spirit in the gathering of believers who pray, study God's Word together and encourage each other to faithfully live out God's truth. In addition to the Holy Spirit's illumination, John Calvin recognizes that when believers gather together, they collectively benefit from the many different spiritual gifts present, "with a far fuller and richer treasure of heavenly wisdom than each one separately."¹⁰⁶⁷ These results show that small group participation was more highly related to willingness to implement changes than simply reading the book alone, although both were significant at the higher level of confidence (0.01).

Conclusions for Secondary Questions Related to the Primary Thesis

This phenomenon of small groups effectively reinforcing information, including biblical theology, is supported by the results of a secondary question related to the thesis. A significant statistical correlation, at the 0.05 level of confidence, was demonstrated between respondents' exposure to biblical theology through participation in a small group (question 3) and the respondents'

¹⁰⁶⁶ Smith, *Taking Charge of Change*, 61-62.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8.11 v 2, 1159-1160.

willingness to participate in the process of examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that score (question 18). This correlation was not as statistically significant (0.05 level of confidence) as those related to the primary thesis question (0.01 level of confidence). However, the correlation between the amount of the book the respondent read (question 4) with the respondent's willingness to participate in the process of examining factors contributing to the church's lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that score (question 18), did not quite prove significant, with a score of 0.053. Exposure to biblical theology without the benefit of Spirit-anointed small group interaction was not as strong a correlation.

These observations may suggest implications for the larger church, particularly in response to those who assert that exposure to a Christian program on TV or the radio is comparable to attending worship with the Body of believers. Exposure to biblical theology involves more than providing written material or even good preaching, but opportunities for parishioners to encounter more if not all the gifts of the Spirit through interacting with the Body of believers. This is consistent with Christ's mandate to "make disciples."¹⁰⁶⁸

This secondary question was not as statistically significant as the primary thesis question. The process of praying and strategizing, or strategic planning, is not compatible with some people's personality, particularly those who value action over planning. Another possible explanation is the concern some people

¹⁰⁶⁸ Matt. 28:18ff.

have expressed about plans that never materialize beyond committee presentations.

The other secondary question showed no statistical significance between being exposed to biblical theology, either by participation in a small group or by reading the book, with the respondent's willingness to become more involved in the church in general (question 20). In fact, it appears exposure to biblical theology shows a negative impact upon respondents' willingness to become involved. Three of 44 respondents (6.8 percent) who participated in small groups reported being less willing to get involved in the church. Likewise, 3 of 46 (6.5 percent) who read at least part of the book reported being less willing to get involved in the church.

The results show the more respondents participated in small groups, the less their willingness to become involved. Those attending five or more small group sessions are actually less likely to be more willing to become involved (14 of 31, 45 percent) than those who attended fewer small group sessions (23 of 33, 70 percent)). A remarkable difference was found with those who did not participate in any small group sessions. Seventeen such persons report they are more willing to become involved (17 of 27, 63 percent). Small group participation appears to be associated with a lower incidence of one's willingness to become more involved in the church.

Those who never read the book report they are more willing to increase their participation (60 percent) compared to less than 45 percent who read the entire book. Those who read up to six chapters of the book were only slightly

better at under 48 percent. It appears to this researcher, based on the results of this survey, that reading more of the book is associated with being less willing to increase one's involvement in the church.

These findings appear to run counter to the primary thesis, since implementing recommended change is hampered if persons exposed to biblical theology are not willing to become more involved in the church to actually implement recommended changes. Likewise, those who are motivated to become more involved are less exposed if not unexposed to the biblical theology underlying proposed changes.

Those who participated most fully in small groups and in reading the book may well be active members very involved already in the church, perhaps even overly-involved, thus not looking to be more involved than they currently are. Of those currently serving in the church, 49 percent report an increase in their willingness to become involved, compared with 64.7 percent of those respondents not serving in the church currently. This is not necessarily a negative indicator for those demonstrating high involvement already by participating in the small groups and reading the book. In fact, of the 20 persons who participated in every small group session, 100 percent indicated there was no change or an increase in their willingness to become involved in the church.¹⁰⁶⁹

These findings suggest other factors besides exposure to biblical theology are contributing to these individuals' willingness to become more involved.

¹⁰⁶⁹ 13 of 20 (65 percent) indicated no change, 7 of 20 (35 percent) indicated were more willing to become involved. Those attending 3 or more small group sessions, over 97 percent indicated there was no change or an increase in their willingness to become involved in the church. One individual reported a decrease in willingness to become involved.

Positively, a majority of respondents express an increased willingness to become involved in the church, especially among those not currently involved. Christ Church would be wise to actively identify these willing workers to connect them with a viable ministry suited for their gifts and calling.

Christ Church's Minimum Factor

The only question assessing respondents' familiarity with Natural Church Development's quality characteristics that yielded a significant result was one related to Christ Church's minimum factor, loving relationships. The question read, "I believe the Bible teaches that believers must not bother one another with troublesome concerns or offenses." Anticipating a negative response, this question is one facet of congregational life that contributed to the church's low loving relationships score. For Christ Church to recognize that clearing up troublesome concerns and offenses is taught in Scripture shows encouraging progress toward strengthening the church in this area of weakness. Those who read the entire book were especially alert to this truth, as 96.6 percent gave the desired answer in contrast to 84.6 percent of those who did not read the book.

Natural Church Development

This researcher wrote the book, *A Church After God's Own Heart*, in order to provide a biblical rationale for the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development, in hopes this would help to motivate parishioners to implement changes recommended as a result of a Natural Church Development survey. However, of those who read the entire book, only 65.5 percent agreed or

strongly agreed that our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey.

Those who did not read the book were more confident (73.1 percent). Except for a brief reference in the preface, the book does not promote Natural Church Development or even explain the survey, minimum factor or other such technical aspects. These findings suggest a lack of connection between the biblical theology presented in the book and the actual Natural Church Development implementation process.

One suggestion to strengthen the helpfulness of this book in future applications would be to add a chapter and small group study session on the Natural Church Development implementation process. This could lead the congregation through the “all by itself” principle from Mark 4:28, the minimum factor, the value of strengthening this weakest characteristic and the organic factors essential to church health. Presenting this as the last chapter would serve as a concluding study that would provide each group opportunities to strategize ways to implement healthier procedures and attitudes based on all they have learned. It would also provide opportunity for participants to recognize connections between their biblical studies and effecting positive change by applying biblical principles. At least one session would be helpful to move individuals from a spiritualistic paradigm that insists “praying for a breakthrough”

is all that is necessary for a church to be healthy. Such a paradigm diminishes the significance of the practical acts that are also necessary.¹⁰⁷⁰

Recommended Improvements

The completion of a project often reveals insights that would make the project more helpful. Several recommendations follow.

First, a cross-tabulation of worship attendance with one's willingness to implement recommended changes was not included in the statistical analysis. This would provide another measure of exposure to biblical theology and its correlation to willingness. Like the small group experience, the cumulative exposure to the preaching series, the worship experience, the fellowship of the church, including informal conversations with other parishioners as well as other ways the pastor, worship leaders or early adopters express biblical truth in words or in practice, all are potential contributors to one's exposure.

Second, a reliable pre-test instrument with a numbering system that would maintain anonymity while providing measurement of respondents' observable willingness to implement change would be more reliable than self-reporting. Questions targeting actual participation in specific behaviors consistent with implementing recommended changes could be compared before and after the project is conducted.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Nehemiah not only prayed but carried out specific acts in order to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Paul summarizes the Divine/human dynamic, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." 1 Cor. 3:6.

For Further Study

One follow-up project would integrate the insights from this paper with the *Natural Church Development Implementation Guide*¹⁰⁷¹ into a manual to assist churches in the process of implementing change. The six growth forces of Natural Church Development (interdependence, multiplication, energy transformation, sustainability, symbiosis and fruitfulness), which were not examined in this study, could also be included in this manual.¹⁰⁷² The insights from other church health resources as well as insights from motivational theory would be integrated in this manual to guide churches as they assess their strengths and strategies to discern and implement recommended changes.

As senior pastor of Christ Church, this writer is more convinced than ever of the value of motivating church health with theology. As Christ Church faces new opportunities and fresh forms of resistance, this pastor finds in this study renewed affirmation to seek God's face in prayer,¹⁰⁷³ search God's Word for biblical theology related to the issue and be attentive to hear a Word from the Lord.¹⁰⁷⁴ This pastor is also alert to the human and organizational dynamics of the situation, including contemporary writings on the issue. However, Scripture

¹⁰⁷¹ Schwarz and Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.

¹⁰⁷² Schwarz, *Color Your World*, 89-123.

¹⁰⁷³ Moses' prayer life is a compelling coping mechanism Scripture offers for leaders facing persistent resistance. Ex. 15:25, 16:4, 17:4, 19:3, 33:7-34:28; Nu. 11:2, 10-23, 12:13, 14:10-35.

¹⁰⁷⁴ John Calvin said, "For even if [scripture] wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit." Calvin, *Institutes*, 80.

provides the trustworthy instructions for faith and practice over other literature, even some ecclesiastical literature.¹⁰⁷⁵

Motivating church health with theology, which this project presents, could be followed-up with further studies on motivating further aspects of the Christian life with theology. Specific aspects of each of the eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development would provide a practical follow-up for this project. For example, one aspect of empowering leadership is mentoring. Expanding upon the teaching in *A Church After God's Own Heart*, supplemented with other resources on mentoring, discipleship and leadership preparation could be presented in a series of sermons, small group studies, personal reading and application exercises. One goal of this follow-up study would be to increase the number of mentoring relationships in the church. Another goal would be to improve the quality of existing mentoring relationships. Each of the eight quality characteristics contain one or more aspects that could be expanded this way.

Recommendations Based on These Conclusions

Biblical theology is foundational to church health. Healthy change throughout the pages of Scripture is presented with supporting theology, whether a Word of the Lord, God's covenant relationship, judgment, natural revelation or a carefully crafted biblical rationale, as found in Paul's letters and elsewhere. Since the church has no authority outside biblical theology, it is imperative that

¹⁰⁷⁵ John Calvin said, "The only authorized way of teaching in the church is by the prescription and standard of his Word." Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, 4.8.8, 1155.

pastors and lay leaders be diligent students of God's Word and the theological implications for their churches to be healthy and faithful. Pastors and congregations must preach and teach biblical theology more deliberately and thoroughly in order to equip the saints to be theologically discerning. Small groups are an effective means to reinforce biblical thinking and a theologically informed approach to life issues.

Small groups are essential to equipping parishioners theologically. Simply reading, teaching or proclaiming biblical truth does not bring about lasting change in people as thoroughly as the engagement and accountability of small group interactions and reinforcement over extended periods of time. Faithful churches will prioritize finding effective ways to foster discipling relationships among their members, whether small groups, mentoring relationships, prayer partnerships or other strategies.

Preaching must be more theologically informative. Many preachers cater to parishioners' felt needs, sacrificing revelation for relevance. A more faithful approach to relevance is inductive preaching that arouses interest in a common felt need, with illustrations underscoring why this is important, followed by a theological teaching on how to view the issue and determine a faithful approach to address it based on biblical theology. Few parishioners appreciate theology without considerable help determining how it relates to everyday life. Pastors are wise to prepare their flocks for these increasingly complex times.

Finally, faithful churches take seriously the Great Commission. If one's church is not growing, one must honestly examine how faithful one's church truly

is. Great Commission churches needn't be mega-churches, but new believers need to go somewhere in order to be discipled to maturity. A small church that prefers to stay small may be actively winning souls to Christ who are discipled in another congregation. Some churches may choose to partner with each other. A well-endowed congregation in a changing neighborhood, for instance, if it simply will not incorporate the new neighbors in its fellowship, may plant a new church in that neighborhood or partner with a struggling church that is effectively reaching and integrating that community into God's family. Hopefully, such a partnership will transform peoples' thinking and understanding of the church's true purpose.

Whatever changes are necessary for a church to be healthy and faithful, it is a mistake to initiate change without providing a theological rationale. Parishioners must own the problem, recognize they have a mandate from God to address the needed change and be convinced the new course of action is consistent with God's Word. While many people respond hesitantly to the prospect of change, most if not all believers truly want to be faithful to God's will. Pastors and church leaders must be careful students of God's Word and its application to their churches. Parishioners need persistent reminders of how a given change, and the sacrifices associated with that change serve to fulfill God's purposes. Careful attention to the theological rationale for changes being implemented will lower parishioners' resistance and motivate them to serve God whole-heartedly.

APPENDIX 1

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE AND ANNOUNCEMENT

Christ Church Chronicle

Worship: 8:00 & 10:45 A.M. Phone: 570/658-4312 Sunday School: 9:30 – 10:30 A.M.

.....www.christchurchbeaversprings.org.....

Volume 37, No.1

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

December 21, 2004

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. [qvb://0/anchor/29](#) Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.” - Matthew 6:28-29 NIV.

Jesus teaches us about living for the Kingdom of God by weaning us of our obsession with the things of this world. In order to let go of our earthly securities to fully trust God, Jesus helps us understand the way God actually provides. Jesus said, “See how the lilies of the field grow.” The word “see” does not fully express the intensity of the original Greek word (*katamathete*), which means to “observe well,” “carefully consider,” “learn thoroughly,” or “diligently study.” Jesus is not speaking as a poet calling us to be inspired by the beauty of these blossoms. His language is quite deliberate, telling us to diligently study “*how* the lilies of the field *grow*.” Jesus calls us to carefully consider the process of growth that takes place in the organic realm.

This sentence comes in the context of Jesus instructing us not to worry, but to trust God and to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matt. 6:33)

Just as a plant needs water, sun, good soil and nutrients to grow and be healthy, there are growth factors in the Body of Christ that God uses to enable the church to grow “all by itself” (Mark 4:28). Like tending a garden, church leaders and parishioners can enhance the growth and vitality of the body of Christ by ensuring that all the growth factors God provides are present and adequate.

Beginning January 16, through preaching and in our small groups we will begin to “carefully consider” the 8 characteristics God’s Word teaches are necessary for a church to be healthy. The Hebrew term *dabar* has a double meaning: ‘word’ and ‘event.’ Just as atheists can know the Bible without knowing the living God, the written word must become the living word as, led by the Holy Spirit, we put into practice what we learn.

New groups are forming. Sign up lists are in the rear or the sanctuary. Copies of our text: *What the Bible Says About Church Health* will be in your mailbox in early January.

A thriving church comes by meditating upon and thoroughly learning just how God provides for every living organism, and dedicating ourselves fully to living in harmony with God’s design.

Growing With You in Christ,
Dave Meckley, Pastor

God's Design For A Healthy Church

An 8 week Small Group Bible Study

Empowering Leadership – January 16

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. – 2 Timothy 2:2

Gift-oriented Ministry – January 23

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. - 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Passionate Spirituality – January 31

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:30-31

Functional Structures – February 6

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ." – 1 Corinthians 12:12

Inspiring Worship – February 13

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. [qvb://0/anchor/24](#)God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." - John 4:23-24

Holistic Small Groups – February 20

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." - Acts 2:42

Need-oriented evangelism – February 27

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [qvb://0/anchor/37](#)Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. [qvb://0/anchor/38](#)Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." - Matthew 9:36-38

Loving Relationships – March 6

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. [qvb://0/anchor/35](#)By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." – John 13:34-35

APPENDIX 2

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS AND RESULTS

Christ Church Pre-Survey

Please circle the answer you find most accurate (NA= No Answer).

Unless otherwise noted, circle ONLY ONE ANSWER PER QUESTION:

1. Prayer, Bible Study and Spiritual discernment are essential for faithful leadership.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

2. I believe the Bible teaches that believers must be honest with each other, even at the risk of some conflict.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

3. I believe the Bible teaches that evangelism should be focused on:

Needs / Gospel / Conversion / Numbers / NA

4. I believe the Bible teaches that my Christian life should be:

Disciplined / Joyfully contagious / Sacrificial / Genuine / NA

5. I believe the Bible teaches that believers should:

Sacrifice / Serve / Love each other / Disciple / NA

6. I believe the Bible teaches that worship should be:

Orderly / Spontaneous / Spiritual / Inspiring / Evangelistic / NA

7. I believe the Bible teaches that groups should focus on:

Truth / Life issues / Applying truth to life / Evangelism / Serving / NA

8. I believe the Bible teaches that worship music should be:

Hymns / Worshipful / Non-existent / Words from Scripture / Spontaneous / NA

9. I believe the Bible teaches that leaders are to:

Lead / Develop other leaders / Delegate / Teach / Rule / NA

10. I believe the Bible teaches that ministry is to be:

Fun / Sacrificial / Based on one's gifts / Evangelistic / NA

11. I believe the Bible teaches that leaders are to:

Disciple / Lead / Serve / Preach / Evangelize / NA

Christ Church Pre-Survey – Page 2

12. I believe making changes in the way the church operates can be necessary and faithful.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

13. I would personally volunteer or accept an invitation to participate in making recommended changes in our church.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

14. Our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

15. I would participate in the process of examining factors contributing to our lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that area of church life.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

16. I would participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve our lowest church health score.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / NA

17. In the last two years I have participated in a Sunday School class:

Weekly / Bi-weekly / Monthly / Occasionally / Never

18. In the last two years I have participated in worship:

Weekly / Bi-weekly / Monthly / Occasionally / Never

19. In the last two years, I have participated in other small groups (*circle all that apply*):
40 Days of Purpose / 40 Days of Community / Bible Study / Prayer Group / Other

20. In the last two years, I have served on (*circle all that apply*):

Affiliation committee / Strategic Planning / Council / NCD Implementation

Comments:

Thank you for your time and participation

CHRIST CHURCH PRE-SURVEY RESULTS

Survey administered on January 9, 2005 to worshippers at both services. 74 surveys were returned. One responded to the question on the frequency one attends worship in the last two years: "never". We had 2 first-time visitors that day. One of those may have answered that way. Some left that question blank.

Key: SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; N= Neutral; D= Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree; NA= No Answer..

1. Question unrelated to thesis. Not scored.

2. Loving Relationships

SA 43	A 28	N 1	D 0	SD 0	NA 0
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3. Need-oriented Evangelism

<u>Needs 14</u>	Gospel 40	Numbers 1	Conversion 11	NA 3
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4. Passionate Spirituality

Disciplined 8	<u>Joy 20</u>	Sacrif. 2	Genuine 38	NA 0
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5. Loving Relationships

Sacrif. 1	Serve 27	<u>Love 34</u>	Disciple 5	NA 1
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6. Inspiring Worship

Order 1	Spont. 8	Spirit. 35	<u>Inspiring 15</u>	Evang. 7	NA 2
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7. Holistic Small Groups

Truth 6	Life 6	<u>Apply 37</u>	Evang. 6	Serve 13	NA 0
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8. Question unrelated to thesis. Not scored.

9. Functional Structures

Lead 22	<u>Develop 30</u>	Delegate 2	Teach 13	Rule 0	NA 2
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10. Gift-oriented Ministry

Fun 3	Sac. 4	<u>Based Gift 42</u>	Evang. 17	NA 2
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11. Empowering Leadership 42

<u>Discip. 19</u>	Lead 23	<u>Serve 23</u>	Preach 0	Evang. 3	NA 1
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12. I believe making changes in the way the church operates can be necessary and faithful.

SA 27 A 37 N 9 D 0 SD 0 NA 0

13. I would personally volunteer or accept an invitation to participate in making recommended changes in our church.

SA 8 A 39 N 22 D 0 SD 2 NA 5

14. Our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey.

SA 11 A 37 N 13 D 3 SD 0 NA 11

15. I would participate in the process of examining factors contributing to our lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that area of church life.

SA 8 A 29 N 20 D 2 SD 1 NA 9

16. I would participate in the process of implementing recommended changes to improve our lowest church health score.

SA 7 A 39 N 16 D 0 SD 0 NA 6

17. In the last two years I have participated in a Sunday School class:

Week 40 Bi-Weekly 6 Monthly 1 Occas. 11 Never 10

18. In the last two years I have participated in worship:

Week 58 Bi-Weekly 2 Monthly 3 Occas. 6 Never 1

19. In the last two years, I have participated in other small groups (*circle all that apply*):

40 Purp: 60 40 Com 46 Bible 23 Pray 14 Other 6

20. In the last two years, I have served on (*circle all that apply*):

Affilia 4 Strate 7 Council 10 NCD Im 2

Comments:

POST-SURVEY

Christ Church Survey

Your honest responses to the following questions will be used by Pastor Dave in his doctor of ministry thesis project. Please do not sign your name. Your responses will be kept confidential. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

1. Since January, I have participated in a Sunday School class:

- Every week
- About two times each month
- About once a month
- A few times
- Never

2. Since January, I have participated in Worship services:

- Every week
- About two times each month
- Once a month
- A few times
- Never

3. Since January, I participated in a Church Health small group:

- 7-8 times
- 5-6 times
- 3-4 times
- 1-2 times
- Not at all

4. How much of the book “*What The Bible Says About Church Health*” have you read?

- 7-8 chapters
- 5-6 chapters
- 3-4 chapters
- 1-2 chapters
- None

5. In the past two years, what other small groups have you participated in?

- 40 Days of Purpose
- 40 Days of Community
- Bible study *(check all that apply)*
- Prayer group
- Other

6. In the past two years, I have served on:

- Affiliation committee
- Strategic planning
- Council *(check all that apply)*
- Natural Church Development Implement'n Team

For questions 7 – 19, please circle the choice which best represents your opinion.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
Agree

SD D N A SA

7. I believe making changes in the way the church operates can be absolutely necessary.

SD D N A SA

8. Our church's health could be improved by making changes in our weakest area based on the results of a Natural Church Development survey.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

9. I believe the Bible teaches that evangelism includes addressing people's needs.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

10. I believe the Bible teaches that believers must not bother one another with troublesome concerns or offenses.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

11. I believe the Bible teaches that one's Christian life should be joyfully contagious.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

12. I believe the Bible teaches that worship should be inspiring.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

13. I believe the Bible teaches that small groups should focus on applying truth to life.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

14. I believe the Bible teaches that leaders are to develop other leaders.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

15. I believe the Bible teaches that believers should find a ministry based on their spiritual gift.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

16. I believe the Bible teaches that believers must be honest with each other, even at the risk of bringing about some conflict.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

17. I believe the Bible teaches servant leadership.

SD **D** **N** **A** **SA**

18. I would participate in the process of examining factors contributing to our lowest score in order to pray and strategize ways to improve that area of church life.

SD

D

N

A

SA

19. I would participate in the process of implement recommended changes to improve our lowest church health score.

SD

D

N

A

SA

20. Over the past 5 months, has there been a change in your willingness to volunteer or accept an invitation to become more involved at the church?

Yes, I feel more willing to become involved

There has been no change in my willingness to become more involved

I feel less willing to become more involved

21. Suggest a better name for the book, *What The Bible Says About Church Health*.

The Right Stuff: What Pleases God

God's Design for a Healthy Church

A Church After God's Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church

My own suggestion is:

22. Which service do you prefer to attend?

8:00 A.M.

10:45 A.M.

23. Please indicate why you prefer a particular service.

- Convenient time
 - Style of music
 - Style of service
 - Mostly because fill in the blank
-

24. Gender: Female Male

25. Age: Under 18
 18 – 22
 23 – 29
 30 – 40
 41 – 50
 51 – 60
 over 61

26. Are you a member of this church? Yes No

27. Are you currently serving the church in some capacity?

Yes No

28. Comments:

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MOTIVATING CHURCH HEALTH
WITH THEOLOGY

VOLUME 2

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
DAVID MARK MECKLEY
DECEMBER 6, 2006

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APPENDIX 3

A CHURCH AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART:
TEXT, STUDY GUIDE AND
LEADERS' GUIDE



A Church After God's Own Heart



A Biblical Understanding of a
Healthy Church

David Mark Meckley

A Church After God's Own Heart

A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church

**Small Group Studies and
Leaders' Guide included for each chapter,
since we are not to be hearers only.**

David Mark Meckley

Revised Edition, © 2005

Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA

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To the members of
Christ Church of Beaver Springs

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Preface

In Mark 4:26-29, Jesus likens the kingdom of God to a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Jesus says, “[qvb://0/anchor/27](#)night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. [qvb://0/anchor/28](#)All by itself the soil produces grain.¹

Christian Schwarz, director of the Institute for Natural Church Development, helps churches implement the organic dimensions of church life found in scripture.² Just as a plant needs water, sun, good soil and nutrients to grow and be healthy, there are growth factors in the Body of Christ that God uses to enable the church to grow “all by itself.”³ Like tending a garden, church leaders and parishioners can enhance the growth and vitality of the body of Christ by ensuring these growth factors are present and adequate.

Natural Church Development has researched 26,000 churches in 50 countries on 6 continents to identify these eight quality characteristics present in all healthy churches the world over.⁴ Schwarz initiated Natural Church Development after analyzing 40 years of Church Growth literature and finding only a model-oriented approach. Many church leaders have discovered, after attending the latest seminar, what works in California or Chicago does not necessarily work so well in one’s hometown.

A year before Christian Schwarz published *Natural Church Development*,⁵ Rick Warren, in his book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, wrote, “I believe the key issue for the church for the 21st Century will be church health, not church growth.

Focusing on growth alone misses the point. When congregations are healthy, they grow the way God intends.”⁶

The question remains, in light of Schwarz’s thorough, on-going study, whether each of these demonstrated quality characteristics are indeed Biblically prescribed and faithful to God’s design for His church. Discerning parishioners tend to be unimpressed with statistical success or the latest presentation of “what works.”

The most popular ecclesiology ever written is Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life*.⁷ This readable analysis of the essence of life weaves together 1000 scripture verses to define the five purposes for life on earth. The eight quality characteristics of Natural Church Development fall in alignment with Warren’s five purposes:

<u>Warren’s Purposes:</u>	<u>Natural Church Development:</u>
Worship	Passionate Spirituality and Inspiring Worship
Fellowship	Loving Relationships
Discipleship	Holistic Small Groups and Empowering Leadership
Ministry	Gift-oriented Ministry and Functional Structures
Mission	Need-oriented Evangelism.

Pay attention to the adjectives in these eight quality characteristics. Every church has some form of leadership. The crucial criterion is whether that leadership empowers. All churches worship. Does that worship inspire? Each

quality characteristic identifies an activity necessary to maintain a healthy, growing system.

“It is no accident,” according to Schwarz, “that the Hebrew term *dabar* has a double meaning: ‘word’ and ‘event.’”⁸ Just as atheists can know the Bible without knowing the living God, the written word must become the “living word” “through the power of the Holy Spirit”.⁹ Believers are to receive, believe and put into practice the truths they glean from God’s Word.

This is not just a book to read, but a Biblical study to engage with a small group in your church. The study guide for each chapter in the second half of the book is to assist your small group to discover and act on the “event” accompanying the “word.” Invite God’s Holy Spirit to reveal to you a Word from God that will breathe new life, transform individuals, bring wholeness and accomplish God’s purpose for you and your church.¹⁰ Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you to integrate His truth to enhance the vitality of your congregation’s life and ministry.

Healthy churches are vital, loving fellowships whose passion for Christ impacts their surrounding communities. This vitality is rooted in God’s love to us in Christ. Our new life in Christ ushers us into citizenship in God’s household. We are born again into God’s family, with all the privileges and responsibilities of such a distinguished legacy. The good work God has begun in us He wants to continue and complete. Remember what Paul wrote the Ephesians:

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus

himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22 NIV.)

This study arose from the author's experience as pastor of Christ Church of Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania. This congregation doubled its worshipping congregation in 12 years, then experienced steady decline the next 8 years. This falling off was not limited to worship attendance. Leaders were overwhelmed and difficult to replace. Various issues beneath the surface undermined Christ Church's health. On the surface church life continued with many parishioners unaware anything was amiss. A poll of the 170 regular worshippers at that time revealed a wide range of suggestions, from relocating into a new worship facility to maintaining the status quo. No one would have predicted the diagnosis Christ Church received after the pastor and 30 active laity completed a Natural Church Development survey. This warm, caring congregation was found to be weakest in the area of loving relationships. Those who weren't outraged at this announcement were mystified by it. How could this be, when nearly every prospective member, when asked at the new members' workshop what drew them to Christ Church, mentioned how friendly everyone was.

Natural Church Development held up a mirror to Christ Church to enable her to see a malady she would have never discerned on her own. Christ Church's low score in loving relationships does not mean people do not genuinely love or care about one another. For Christ Church, the issue is developing friendships with other members not in your family, opening the inner workings of the church to newer members, and facing and resolving conflict in a God-honoring way.

Ironically, the leader most outspoken in his objection to Natural Church Development's initial diagnosis was also the small group facilitator to report that his group got more out of the chapter on Loving Relationships than any other. In fact, the group shared vulnerably for over 3 hours—twice the time allotted—as they wanted to engage every question and hear each others' hearts. God has begun a good work in strengthening the health of Christ Church. Without the insights from Natural Church Development, other pursuits would have been undermined by this overlooked essential to church health.

May God give you and your church a testimony of His miraculous intervention as you seek His heart together. Here's to you and your church's good (spiritual) health!

To learn more about
Natural Church Development, contact:

Church Smart Resources
3830 Ohio Ave.
Saint Charles, IL 60174

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<http://www.churchsmart.com>

Chapter 1

Empowering Leadership

Memory Verse: “**And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.**” (2 Timothy 2:2 NIV)

The Character of Empowering Leadership

Paul here illustrates key elements of empowering leadership. Having modeled pastoral integrity and sound teaching to Timothy and the church he served, Paul instructs his young protégé to empower others to carry on this ministry. In addition to modeling and teaching, Paul identifies two characteristics to guide Timothy in assessing prospects: determine that each is reliable and qualified. The term translated, “reliable” (*pistos*) means “trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust or faith.”¹¹ Paul is telling Timothy to find individuals who are not only capable, but are also people of demonstrated character and faith.

A person’s natural ability may be enough for some to conclude that individual will make a good Christian leader. However, without solid character, such ability can be squandered.¹² Credibility lost is not always regained, whether a leader or a church.¹³ Paul urged Timothy to maintain Godly character and sound faith when he said, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:16 NIV). Without solid integrity, a leader cannot say, as the Apostle Paul did,

“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9 NIV). Everything a leader does communicates character, whether good or ill.

Character is first on the list of qualities for an overseer. Paul tells Timothy such a leader “must be above reproach” (1 Ti. 3:1 NIV). Peter details character qualities in his second letter that keep Christians from being “ineffective and unproductive” while living for God (2 Pt. 1:5-8 NIV). These include faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Character is founded upon genuine faith in God. God’s character inspires worship, devotion and transforming one’s life to reflect Godly attributes.¹⁴ Godly leaders across the Testaments have been chosen based on evidence of their relationship with God. In the Old Testament, Moses instructed the people to choose “wise, understanding and respected men” (Dt. 1:13 NIV). New Testament believers chose men to oversee the distribution to widows who were “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Ac. 6:3 NIV).

Character involves not only outward obedience, but also one’s heart yielded to God in pure devotion. A rich man who obeyed God’s commandments since childhood, still held treasures dearer to him than God (Mk. 10:20-22). Luke says this man held a position of leadership (Lk. 18:18). His conflicting loyalties caused him to walk away from Jesus, forfeiting the use of his abilities for God’s Kingdom (Lk 18:22-23). On the other hand, King David’s character was not flawless. His anointed leadership and legacy rests in the fact that he was “a man

after [God's] own heart" (Ac. 13:22 NIV). Humbly recognizing my utter dependence upon Christ's saving grace and relying upon the Holy Spirit's empowerment positions me to glorify God rather than myself. Oswald Chambers asserts, "It is not a matter of our equipment, but of our poverty; not of what we bring with us, but of what God puts into us; not a matter of natural virtues, of strength of character, of knowledge, or of experience.... The only thing of value is being taken into the compelling purpose of God and being made His friends.... God's friendship is with people who know their poverty. He can accomplish nothing with the person who thinks that he is of use to God.... whatever happens, we must maintain our relationship with Him. We must never allow anything to damage our relationship with God, but if something does damage it, we must take the time to make it right again.... The most important aspect of Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain and the surrounding influence and qualities produced by that relationship."¹⁵ Moses had that kind of relationship with God. Moses' heart was to know God intimately, abide in His Presence and do His will, saying, "teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you" (Ex. 33:13 NIV).

Joseph Stowell observes, "Leaders rarely fail because they do not know how to lead. Leaders fail because they cease to see themselves as followers of Christ."¹⁶ Maintaining accountable relationships can be threatening to leaders. Such transparency with those who will dare to tell a leader the truth, even when it is hard to hear, safeguards one's character and Godly testimony. Paul mentored Timothy to hold tenaciously to God by faith, to flee from temptation "and pursue

righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. [qvb://0/anchor/12](#)

Fight the good fight of the faith”(1 Ti. 6:11-12 NIV).

It is not knowledge alone that qualifies one as a credible leader, but faithfulness in applying that knowledge, motivated by love.¹⁷ Paul urged young Timothy to assert his rightful place of leadership by setting “an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Ti. 4:12 NIV).

Since all Christian leaders are first followers of Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, each must maintain a teachable spirit.¹⁸ A teachable demeanor is more important than knowledge, ability or experience. Apollos was a well educated man who used his thorough knowledge of the scriptures to teach about Jesus accurately and passionately (Ac 18:24-26). However, his teachable spirit enabled him to benefit from additional instruction by Priscilla and Aquila.

The Apostle Peter knew the Law of God. In Acts 10 he had to learn the new thing God was doing with Gentiles coming to faith (Ac 10:9-48). Unlearning old ways may be the toughest component of a teachable spirit.

Servant Leadership

James MacGregor Burns notes, “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth”¹⁹ With over 850 different definitions of leadership, a Biblical refresher on the topic can help church people discern a God-honoring perspective.²⁰ Jesus did this with his disciples, ““You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. [qvb://0/anchor/26](#)Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, [qvb://0/anchor/27](#)and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—[qvb://0/anchor/28](#)just as the Son of Man did

not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”’
(Mt. 20:25-28 NIV).

Jesus modeled and taught servant leadership (Mt. 23:11-12). The motivation for servant leadership is not power or glory for the leader, but serving the needs of those entrusted to one’s leadership. Jesus’ leadership style was to set the example, then to ask his disciples who were emerging as leaders to do likewise. Jesus empowered them for Godly leadership, not by providing perks or prestige, but by living a selfless attitude of humility and grace (Mt. 23:1-12). When the twelve disciples were intoxicated with Jesus’ mastery of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, some argued over positions of greatness but none dealt with the group’s dirty feet while reclining at the last supper (Jn. 13:1ff.). Again, Jesus modeled the character of a servant by washing the feet of all 12 disciples. “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. [qvb://0/anchor/15](#)I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (Jn. 13:14-15 NIV). This demonstration of servant leadership also confronted the disciples’ pride by the irony of the about-to-be-crucified Messiah’s humble act. Jesus’ life and example clearly conveyed His uncompromising Kingdom focus and selfless devotion to those He was called to serve. The very nature of His character emerging at impressionable moments equipped his disciples with a vision and model of godly leadership qualities.

Leadership is a Spiritual Gift

Scripture teaches that leadership is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Ro. 12:8). This word, “leadership” (*proistemi*), as used in Romans 12:8, has two applicable definitions. The first is to “be at the head (of), rule, direct.”²¹ The second definition describes the heart of a leader, to “be concerned about, care for, give aid.”²² Those God has so gifted can make their greatest contribution to the Kingdom of God by serving diligently as God has equipped and called. The same word, (*proistemi*), is used in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, referring to candidates for church overseer who must demonstrate ability to manage one’s own household.

God gives every believer a gift and a role to fulfill in order to maintain the health and vitality of the Body of Christ.²³ Many do not see themselves as leaders. However, when operating out of one’s spiritual gift, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, one is at least an example of faithfulness. God leads faithful followers to accomplish His purposes.²⁴ God still leads many unsuspecting followers into positions of leadership.

The Call

Our sovereign God not only gifts people with leadership but God also calls individuals to serve as leaders. Some, like David, seem unlikely leaders to others at the time (1 Sa. 16:12-13). Others, like Jeremiah, question their own adequacy (Jer. 1:4-10). Abram was called by God into a covenant relationship that would make him a leader of leaders, blessing the whole world.²⁵ Moses was called, equipped, and supplied with more than adequate staff to lead the Hebrews out of bondage.²⁶ Even Jesus’ calling, long foretold by ancient prophets, was recognized

by his mother Mary, by Joseph, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, the Magi, and John the Baptist.²⁷ God confirmed Jesus' calling as the Son of God at His baptism and transfiguration.²⁸ Jesus personally called each of the disciples to serve as apostles.²⁹ Luke mentions Jesus spent the night in prayer before calling The Twelve (Lk. 6:12).

Discerning God's call personally arises out of much prayer, Bible study and self-assessment. One's calling is verified by those who know one well and recognize God's equipping and one's potential, passion or fruitfulness.³⁰ Even those who are called by God, fully qualified and abide in surrendered communion with the Almighty need encouragement as they step out into new ministries. God personally commissioned Joshua, encouraging him at least four times to "be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:6, 7, 9, 18).

Discipleship is Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership, or "equipping the saints for ministry" is what Jesus called discipleship.³¹ Discipling, or mentoring can be traced to the days when God instructed Moses to groom Joshua to carry on Moses' leadership role.³² Jesus' earthly ministry was primarily invested in the lives of his closest disciples, the Twelve. "He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach [qvB://0/anchor/15](http://qbv://0/anchor/15) and to have authority to drive out demons."³³ Empowering leadership, as Jesus modeled it, is up-close and personal. He chose the Twelve to "be with him" as he equipped them to preach and gave them authority over evil spirits. The Apostle Paul

likewise mentored several young protégés, including Timothy, who he referred to as “my true son in the faith” (1 Ti. 1:2 NIV).

Scripture describes empowering leadership as Christ calling individuals to roles of authority, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, “pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”(Eph. 4:11-12 NIV). In the church, empowering leaders equip their parishioners and look for new prospects with potential to get involved. If 20% of the members of a church do 80% of the work, empowering leaders are scanning that untapped 80% to find the next most promising disciple. Jerry Cook notes, “It is not the pastor’s job to meet everybody’s need.... The pastor should be a facilitator.... Two things are necessary: people must be trained to use their own gifts in ministry; and the church must grant the people the right to minister in crisis situations on the spot.”³⁴ The Apostle Paul concludes the teaching above by noting that the church “grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16 NIV).

Every believer is gifted with something significant to contribute to the Body of Christ. Many are simply waiting to be discovered. In a day when individualism is chic and isolation is epidemic, church leaders must reclaim this Biblical vision of equipping and empowering saints in discipling relationships.³⁵ Warren Bennis says “Leadership is not so much the exercise of power itself as the empowerment of others.”³⁶ The temptation to just “do it myself” results in lonely leaders and squandered saints.

“If you really want to be a successful leader,” John Maxwell notes, “you must develop other leaders around you.”³⁷ Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro was the first ministry consultant, teaching Moses to delegate (Ex. 18:17ff.). Moses’ time equipping other judges to handle basic cases raised the level of understanding of God’s law throughout the community of judges. Moses thoroughly instructed Israel’s judges, particularly to be fair and impartial regardless of anyone’s status (Dt. 1:13-25). Those more gifted rose to greater responsibility as they demonstrated keener insight. Leadership development and oversight of new leaders provided a more interactive equipping environment as difficult cases were referred to the next level. In this way growth and training opportunities were built into the system. Judges at every level experienced mentoring.

Kingdom Perspective

Empowering leaders seek to glorify God and help others reach their potential with a focus on God’s Kingdom rather than their position, power, privileges or perks. The seventy elders in Numbers 11 were enlisted by God to lighten Moses’ load of responsibility (Nu. 11:16-17, 24-25). The Holy Spirit fell upon all seventy of them. With so many anointed leaders, issues of jealousy arose (Nu. 11:29). A Kingdom perspective was required to keep such wayward feelings in check. Focusing on the “big picture” of the Kingdom of God enables one to set aside concerns based on self interest.

Peter Drucker wisely observes that “no executive has ever suffered because his people were strong and effective.”³⁸ In fact, Drucker maintains that

effective leaders intentionally equip others to do what they do. “There is no success without a successor.”³⁹ John Maxwell defines a leader’s success as “the maximum utilization of the abilities of those under him.”⁴⁰ Andrew Carnegie confided, “I wish to have on my epitaph: ‘here lies a man who was wise enough to bring into his service men who knew more than he.’”⁴¹ As believers, our focus is not on advancing ourselves but advancing the Kingdom of God. Christian Schwarz notes that “the true fruit of a leader is not a follower, but a new leader.”⁴² Following Jesus’ example, the Apostle Paul advised his successor, Timothy, to “entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” the truths he had passed on (2 Ti. 2:2 NIV).

Peter taught elders to serve willingly, to not be greedy or bossy but rather to set a Godly example (1 Pt. 5:1-3). This is in sharp contrast to the competitive culture that values prosperity and power. John Maxwell highlights the different attitudes held by leaders who:

<u>Win by Competitiveness</u>	vs.	<u>Win by Cooperation</u> ⁴³
Look at others as enemies		Look at others as friends
Concentrate on yourself		Concentrate on others
Are suspicious of others		Are supportive of others
Winning determined by your skills		Winning determined by the skills of many

Jesus Empowered His Disciples

Jesus empowered his disciples to teach early in his ministry. “Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, [qvb://0/anchor/2](#)and he began to teach them”(Mt. 5:1-2 NIV). Whether Jesus taught the Twelve, who then relayed His teaching to the masses, or Jesus Himself taught the crowds, the Twelve had “front row seats” when Jesus taught. Likewise, Jesus taught them privately and “explained everything” to his disciples after dismissing the crowds.⁴⁴

Jesus launched his disciples into leadership through incremental steps. Jesus sent The Twelve out two by two on a limited mission with authority and specific instructions (Mt. 10:5ff). Upon their return, Jesus gathered feedback on their progress, “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught” (Mk. 6:30 NIV). Later he expanded the mission team to 72, again equipped with authority, specific instructions and a partner (Lk. 10:1). After this, Jesus encountered some of his disciples stumped by a contrary demon. Later, they asked Him, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” (Mt. 17:19 NIV). Jesus was able to coach them on the importance of prayer and faith applied to real life dilemmas.

Holy Spirit Empowerment

Mentoring matters, yet one is not adequately empowered until clothed with “power from on high,” the filling of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Prior to Pentecost, God empowered prophets with the Holy Spirit to speak and minister with divine anointing.⁴⁶ Today, believers must keep being filled with the Holy Spirit and “keep in step with the Spirit.”⁴⁷

The Bible illustrates how Spirit-filled Christians lived according to the Spirit of God.⁴⁸ Stephen focused upon Jesus and the glory of God in the face of murderous opposition (Ac. 7:55-56). Believers in the church at Antioch worshipped, fasted and prayed as they sought the Holy Spirit's guidance before calling Barnabas and Saul to minister (Ac. 13:2ff.).

The Apostle Paul spells this out practically, telling the churches in Rome and Galatia to live by the Holy Spirit as opposed to living by the sinful nature.⁴⁹ Setting one's mind on "what the Spirit desires" brings life, peace, righteousness and is pleasing to God (Ro. 8:5-10 NIV). By offering one's whole self sacrificially to God and renewing one's thinking by feeding upon pure spiritual truth enables one to be available to God, to better understand God's will and to make the most of each opportunity.⁵⁰

After Pentecost, in the early days of the church, the Twelve recognized their opportunity to implement Jesus' criteria for empowering leadership when a crisis arose in the Jerusalem church's "Meals on Wheels" program. When some widows were overlooked in this charitable ministry due to apparent ethnic issues, the Twelve instructed the church to empower leaders based on demonstrated character qualities of Spiritual anointing and wisdom. "Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them [qvb://0/anchor/4](#)and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Ac. 6:3-4 NIV). Demonstrating a clear sense of their calling to pray and proclaim God's word, the Twelve also recognized God's call on other capable leaders. Their ability to give away

responsibility in light of the “big picture” of God’s advancing kingdom enabled “the Seven” chosen in Acts 6 to step to still greater responsibility. One of the Seven, Stephen, testified before the Jewish authorities with compelling authority. One Pharisee in the crowd was Saul of Tarsus, who later came to faith in Christ and was empowered to minister as Paul the Apostle. Philip, another of the Seven, was used by God to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to faith (Ac. 8:26ff.). Philip went on “preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea” (Ac. 8:40 NIV). Empowering leaders spread the reach of God’s Kingdom exponentially as these individuals grow in their giftedness, step up into strategic challenges and trust God in their calling.

Churches can help to empower leaders by maintaining an atmosphere that encourages spiritual growth and exercising spiritual gifts. The Berean’s daily “open Bible” scrutiny of Paul’s teaching likely created a more interactive learning environment, stimulating deeper thought and more careful preparation (Ac. 17:11). A church that is growing in learning and applying God’s Word and teaming up complimentary gifts for outreach invites believers to discover their gifts and step up to challenges they never would have otherwise considered. As individuals demonstrate leadership potential, John Maxwell says other leaders can further empower them “by instilling faith in their leadership ability and helping them develop and hone leadership skills they don’t know they possess.”⁵¹

From the same church or the same mentor, each individual’s calling takes its own unique shape as one discovers how one is best suited to accomplish God’s purpose. Each church must maintain a Kingdom perspective. The temptation is to

raise up leaders to strengthen one's congregation. However, churches must hold loosely to these most precious assets, for God may have a purpose for their leadership beyond that local fellowship. Henry and Richard Blackaby note that in the church, the Body of Christ, "Christ is the head. Not the figurehead, not the Chairman of the Board. He is the hands-on Director and Orchestrater of all that goes on... He deals ... with every individual directly through the Holy Spirit."⁵² The church is responsible to recognize and affirm God's call, even when that requires releasing a promising leader to serve elsewhere in God's Kingdom.

Chapter 2

Gift-oriented Ministry

Memory Verse: There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV)

God Gives Unique Gifts

Spiritual gifts are “bestowed by the grace of God on individual Christians.”⁵³ Wayne Grudem says, “A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church.”⁵⁴ He goes on to suggest that the various lists of gifts in the Bible can be summarized by the Apostle Peter’s reference to two: “whoever speaks” and “whoever serves” (1 Pt. 4:11 NRSV) Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift to use to build up fellow believers in the church, to spread the Gospel and to further the ministry of God’s Kingdom.⁵⁵ God has provided the church with believers possessing every gift necessary to accomplish His purposes in anticipation of Jesus’ return.⁵⁶

Scripture provides six different lists of spiritual gifts.⁵⁷ None are exhaustive.⁵⁸ Each provides a sampling of the Holy Spirit’s unlimited creativity.⁵⁹ The Apostle Peter celebrates the “rich diversity” of the Spirit’s blessing when he said, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pt. 4:10 NIV).⁶⁰

Each person is unique.⁶¹ Ralph Mattson has helped thousands discern their individual gifts for ministry or a vocation especially designed for them. He cautions against confining individuals to a limited list of gifts or personality traits, saying such narrow categorization “seriously underestimates the genius of the One who designed each person.”⁶² Each individual one meets provides an opportunity to discover a never-before-encountered combination of spiritual gifts and passion for particular ministries.

Regenerate Believers Live by the Holy Spirit

After experiencing the miracle of salvation in Christ, believers are supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit to actually live a new life. Living by the Spirit includes discerning the unique way God has designed us (2 Ti. 1:9). Our personality, experiences, abilities, interests and motivation are not random, but intended by God to serve His purposes. God’s Call is clarified as one accepts their individual characteristics and spiritual gift-mix and begins to serve in the distinct way God has crafted them. Paul put it like this, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10 NIV). Christian Schwarz adds this insight, “When Christians serve in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary!”⁶³

Believers need instruction on spiritual gifts and insight into how God has uniquely equipped them to serve. Too often gift-oriented ministry stalls

somewhere short of actually doing anything for God's Kingdom. Rick Warren is blunt, "The *last* thing many believers need today is to go to another Bible study. They already know far more than they are putting into practice. What they need are serving experiences in which they can exercise their spiritual muscles. Serving is the opposite of our natural inclination. Most of the time we're more interested in '*serve us*' than *service*. We say, 'I'm looking for a church that meets my needs and blesses me,' not 'I'm looking for a place to serve and *be* a blessing.' We expect others to serve us, not vice versa. But as we mature in Christ, the focus of our lives should increasingly shift to living a life of service. The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, 'Who's going to meet *my* needs?' and starts asking, 'Whose needs can I meet?'"⁶⁴

Chuck Colson likens the church to Marine Corps basic training. All believers in the church must be disciplined and trained at least as seriously as the military. Lamenting how casually many believers are about using their gifts, Colson likens them to "weekend warriors whose real jobs occupy them during the week and who just turn out for occasional drills or to hang out in the officers' club on Sundays."⁶⁵ In reality, the church is engaged in serious warfare. "And the battle is not just for flesh and blood; it is for eternal souls."⁶⁶

God Elevates Nobodies to Royal Priests

Many believers feel inadequate or unqualified for significant Christian ministry. This problem may occur for various reasons. Sometimes, in one's zeal for excellence, the qualifications for ministry may seem beyond one's reach. Many keep their gifts to themselves fearing that only someone with all the gifts for every facet of ministry need apply. Such hyper-expectations may inhibit those who have yet to discover they are spiritually gifted and called to minister. The challenge is to draw out those with unutilized spiritual gifts in a safe, encouraging environment. Robert Logan says that every believer needs to get involved at the level of one's "availability, maturity and giftedness."⁶⁷ This could be in a small group or in a one-on-one mentoring relationship.

Exposing the fallacy of thinking that God can't use an unimpressive, one-talent Christian, George Barna notes, "Had the church relied upon a single, incredibly gifted, magnetic individual to replace Jesus, the church would have surely collapsed."⁶⁸ God has a better plan than burning out superstars. Consider how ordinary Jesus' twelve disciples were. They asked dumb questions and were clueless more than once.⁶⁹ Jesus chose normal, fallible, everyday folk. Yet, God powerfully transformed them by the Holy Spirit, spreading the Gospel to every continent over the last 2000 years through their ministry.⁷⁰ God's will is to repeat such life transformation in every believer in every age.⁷¹ Jack Hayford says, "Every member of the Body has the potential to be-and should be fed and led toward functioning as-a fully equipped agent of Jesus Christ, as His minister."⁷²

The Apostle Peter declares that those who were once nobodies are now God's own people, a "royal priesthood" entrusted with the privilege of sharing

with the world the difference God has made in their life.⁷³ Spiritual gifts are one way God empowers believers for their priestly responsibility. The “priesthood of every believer” is a basic lesson learned from the Reformation.⁷⁴ However, four centuries later, the church today has yet to grasp the spiritual impact on this world that will be realized when every believer recognizes their call by God to be His priest at work, at home and in the community.

Attitude of Gift Recipients

In order for believers to discern their spiritual gifts and use them cooperatively, the Apostle Paul counseled the church in Rome, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you”(Ro. 12:3 NIV). J. B. Phillips’ translates that, “try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities.”⁷⁵

Many churches have at least one member who simply has no clue what their spiritual gift may be. When someone says they are not good at anything, they are not necessarily being humble. This may reveal a very self-centered attitude. Think about it. Whether one is down on oneself, or unbearably arrogant, both are self-absorbed. But you cannot separate yourself from the Body of Christ, either through envy (“Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body” (1 Cor. 12:15 NIV)) or through pride (“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Cor. 12:21 NIV)). Whether one thinks of oneself too highly or too lowly, either way, one’s focus is the same: self.

Jesus has just the remedy: deny self (Lk. 9:23; Col. 3:3). Gift-oriented ministry is not about one's weaknesses or strengths. It is about what God can do with anybody who dares to trust Him. God uses ordinary people to carry His extraordinary power to those who need it most. The Apostle Paul testifies, "When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through Christians like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels" (Eph. 3:8-10 MSG). Serving God is a gift, a miracle of grace.

To Build Up the Church

The gifts of the Spirit are designed for use in the corporate life of the Body of Christ.⁷⁶ Noting their eagerness to have spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul coaches the Corinthians to "eagerly desire the greater gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:5). These 'greater' gifts "are those that most edify the church."⁷⁷ Paul underscores the importance of believers using their gifts to strengthen each other, advising, "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church" (1 Cor 14:12 NIV)

Just as one's physical body parts are all interdependent and work cooperatively to enable one to type or to ride a bicycle, so Spirit-empowered Christians do not use their gifts independently of the Body, the church, but in complimentary ways to discover the greater good that can be accomplished by teaming up for ministry.

The Gospel is about interdependence (1 Cor. 12). For too many Christians, the only thing harder than admitting, "I can't do it all by myself," is asking someone to help. American culture prizes self-sufficiency. However, such self-reliance insults God (Dan 4:25-35; Jn. 13:2-8). The Gospel is about being dependent upon God and interdependent within the Body of believers.⁷⁸ The Apostle Paul says that through Christ, "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:16 NIV) Participation is not optional. Every supporting ligament as well as each part is necessary for the Body of Christ, the church, to be healthy.

Paul introduces this idea of interdependence by listing some of the ways God gifts church leaders. Notice the intended outcome of the ministry of each of these leaders. Speaking of Christ, Paul writes, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [qvb://0/anchor/12](#)to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [qvb://0/anchor/13](#)until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13 NIV). These gifted leaders are to equip the saints for ministry so that everyone in the church can be unified in

faith and grow to mature, Christ-like character. Spiritual maturity and sanctification involve the gifts and interdependence of every believer in the church. Ministry is more than accomplishing the task. Christian ministry is a process that includes helping believers discover the power of God available to them. Interdependent ministry enables saints to discover and use their spiritual gifts as well as experiencing the genius of serving in concert with others having complementary gifts. Coordinated Body ministry, which is not necessarily planned by any human being, demonstrates to all how God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20 NIV).

Team Ministry

No two Christians have the exact same gift mix.⁷⁹ “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men” (1 Cor. 12:4-6 NIV).

Because there are so few “superstar” leaders, churches are wise to embrace integrating complementary gifts into ministry teams. Peter Drucker wisely observes, “The purpose of a team is to make the strengths of each person effective and his or her weaknesses irrelevant.”⁸⁰

If interdependence were natural or easy, this chapter would never have to be written. Interdependence requires effort, grace and God’s miraculous intervention. The benefits of complementary gifts are offset by individuals with less than complementary personalities. Teaming up with those so different than

oneself can be trying, even exasperating. Too often people gravitate to those who agree with their ideas and approach. While such alliances can be affirming, they also can miss important nuances available from another perspective. Sid Buzzell asserts that, “differences in opinion and ability are crucial for healthy team functioning.”⁸¹ To proceed alone or with a few carefully selected allies is to slip into the error Paul warns against in 1 Corinthians 12. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Cor. 12:21 NIV). Believers must embrace God’s design, that there are “many parts, but one body.” (1 Cor. 12:20 NIV).

Ministry teams, regardless of the effort necessary to sustain them, are a recurring Biblical pattern.⁸² From Moses, who teamed up with Aaron and Joshua, to Jesus, who developed a team of leaders, not only in The Twelve, but also in the 72 he later sent out in pairs (Lk. 10:1). Sid Buzzell observes that Jesus’ twelve disciples were an interesting mix of working men, mostly fishermen.⁸³ Curiously, Matthew the tax collector, a profession despised by Jews, is included along with Simon the Zealot, “who was at the opposite end of the political spectrum from Matthew. Jesus taught his team of individuals to understand, appreciate and love each other. Jesus molded his team into a tightly knit unit. But he recruited each of them on the basis of their individual strengths. He recruited people who would contribute to the other members of the team and to the team’s overall objectives.”⁸⁴

Gifts Need to be Developed

Even with Holy Spirit empowered gifts, humans have a responsibility to make the most of the gifts entrusted to them. Scripture notes several human variables that affect the effectiveness of one's spiritual gift. Paul advises anyone with the gift of prophecy to use it "in proportion to his faith,"⁸⁵ indicating the gift is affected by the faith of the individual (Rom. 12:6 NIV). The implication is that spiritual gifts can be developed as one's faith is strengthened. Paul counseled Timothy, "do not neglect your gift" (1 Ti. 4:14 NIV). This term, "neglect" also means to "be unconcerned about," "disregard" or "not take care of."⁸⁶ The same word is translated "ignore" in Hebrews 2:3, which asks, "how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" (Hb. 2:3 NIV) The weight of Paul's caution to Timothy is to recognize his ministry is under girded by God's supernatural gifting. Rather than fall into a passive disregard of the Holy Spirit's investment, Timothy is to "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them" (1 Ti. 4:15 NIV). Real progress in his ministry will be evident to everyone and will result in salvation for all concerned (1 Tim. 4:15-16).

Paul reminded Timothy "to fan into flame the gift of God" (2 Ti. 1:6 NIV). Gordon Fee notes how "Timothy is both a younger and less forceful colleague" who must "keep alive the gift" he's been given.⁸⁷ The term translated "fan into flame" "is a metaphor for rekindling a waning fire."

⁸⁸ Here again the apostle recognizes that spiritual gifts can lie dormant in believers, become "rusty" or, positively, be honed to greater effectiveness by diligent use. Wayne Grudem observes, "This variation in strength in spiritual gifts depends on a combination of divine and human influence. The divine influence is

the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit as he “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor 12:11). The human influence comes from experience, training, wisdom, and natural ability in the use of that gift.”⁸⁹ Clearly, God earnestly desires everyone to know one’s spiritual gift, develop it, and use it to engage in gift-oriented ministry.

Chapter 3

Passionate Spirituality

Memory Verse: “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.**” (Mark 12:30-31 NIV)

The Heart of True Faith

Our ultimate purpose is to love God passionately. Scripture uses terms such as “zeal,” and “fervor,” to refer to this genuine enthusiasm for God and godliness.⁹⁰ Passionate spirituality is the heart of true faith. Perhaps you know a church with pristine doctrine, an inspiring heritage, and a strong moral code, that somehow lacks spiritual vitality. In Revelation 2, Jesus tells the church in Ephesus that with all their real strengths, they risk losing everything because they have lost their spiritual passion (Rev. 2:4-5). One’s “first love,” romantically, stirs memories of exuberance, creativity, images of a hopeful future, contentment, as well as an energizing rush of devotion to be with and do for one’s beloved. A return to one’s “First Love” spiritually is life transforming.

Some will think of inspiring worship as an expression of one’s love for God. This is certainly true. Yet, in the Greatest Commandment, Jesus immediately asserts that our love for God naturally expresses itself in loving acts extended to others. Loving God is the heart of *all* we do as Christians. It is our

love for God that motivates us to love others, live obediently to God's truth, and to worship and minister in Jesus' Name. Oswald Chambers says, "The most important aspect of Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain and the surrounding influence and qualities produced by that relationship."⁹¹

Passionate spirituality begins with knowing God personally. More than simply assenting to certain truths, a personal relationship with God involves an internal transformation as one trusts fully and absolutely in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.⁹² The New Testament in the Binumarien language of Papua New Guinea translates the concept, "born again" in John 3:3 as, "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he becomes like a baby again and relearns everything from God's Word."⁹³ This relearning process reveals a desire to know God better and a passion to draw closer to Christ, to abide in Him and be one with Him.⁹⁴

It is no coincidence that the relationship Jesus has with believers in the church is compared to a marriage relationship (Eph. 5:21-32). A believer's thirsting for God, or spiritual passion, leads to intimacy with God in the purest sense. Such nearness with God translates into a life of obedience, joy and accomplishing Jesus' purposes (Jn. 15:8-11). The new identity we receive as a child of God gives us blessed assurance and resilience to extend grace with Christ-like character, even in the face of misunderstanding or hostility. Believers who love God passionately exhibit a vibrant faith that is not only contagious, but awakens a thirst in others to know God more deeply and walk with Him more intimately.

Holy Spirit Empowerment

Spiritual passion requires the Presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life (Eph 1:13-14). Peter told those on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit comes to those who repent and receive Christ as Savior.⁹⁵ R. A. Torrey in his book on *The Holy Spirit* notes that every regenerate person has the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶ However, is the Holy Spirit regarded as a houseguest living in a remote corner, largely ignored; or, does the Holy Spirit have control of every room in one's home?⁹⁷ A life yielded to the Holy Spirit will call upon this indwelling Helper for guidance and strength to resist temptation and to choose the right (Gal. 5:19-21, 24). The spiritual fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control will be characteristic of believers living in harmony with the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:22-25).

Temptation, even moral failure, are opportunities for Spirit-filled believers to take personal inventory, opening the depths of one's soul to Him Who searches one's heart and "intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will"(Rom 8:27 NIV.) Brokenness, according to Larry Crabb, is the realization one has placed secondary things (health, children, marriage) in first place, which is reserved for God alone.⁹⁸ The act of repentance, confessing to God one's desire for the gifts of God more than God Himself, begins a process of restoring one's focus on one's life-giving relationship with God Who alone can satisfy one's desires with good things.⁹⁹ Doug Rumford offers keen insight, "The enemy's

strategy in temptation is not to get us to break a law but to break a heart—God’s heart... When we begin to see sin in terms of love instead of legalism, we begin to tap a new reservoir of resolve to resist temptation and preserve our fellowship with God.”¹⁰⁰

Passionate Worship

Passionate spirituality is not confined to a particular worship style. Whether one offers liturgical or spiritual-warfare prayers, passionate worshippers are those who thirst after an authentic encounter with the living God. Loving God with all one’s being quickly translates into a profound trust in God and an expectancy that God will show up, even in supernatural ways. Such a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ is contagious.

Accept No Substitutes For Authentic Passion

Loving God with all one’s being involves more than personal piety. Passion in one’s spiritual life is often intensified as members engage in ministry according to how God has gifted them. Dedicated, committed service to others increases the flow of the Holy Spirit through believers, awakening or deepening faith and spiritual fruit in all affected.

We love because God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). Our love for God is not something we generate but rather we reciprocate God’s love so generously lavished upon us. Knowing how much God loves us fuels our spiritual passion. Genuine love draws us into the presence of our Beloved (1 Jn. 4:16). Spending time in God’s Presence transforms us from deep within. The evidence of our abiding in Christ expresses itself in love, joy, peace, patience, self-control and

overall godly character that naturally emerges from those who love God and abide in Him (Gal. 5:22-23). As Jesus said, “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”(Jn. 14:4b NIV.)

More than religion or duty, the Christian life is a relationship. Believers are the Bride of Christ.¹⁰¹ Half of us can relate to that more readily than the rest. But imagine a marriage relationship that works: the bills are paid, each does their part, each is well regarded – but there is no spark. Man and wife just pass in the hall as they go their separate ways. They do not hate each other. When pressed, each would volunteer they love each other. When pressed. But they don’t spend time together. There is no connecting. In the ways that matter most, they have lost touch. They honestly do not know each other’s heart. There is no passion. Both are decent people doing many right things, but their enthusiasm is somewhat less than genuine. Jesus put it like this, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! [qvb://0/anchor/16](#)So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Rev. 3:15-16 NIV.)

Jesus, like any bridegroom, is not interested in dutiful compliance. It is enough to make Him gag, or worse. The word translated “spit” is too tame.¹⁰² Jesus’ imagery here is quite repulsive. This is a serious word of judgment, unless one wakes up, faces oneself honestly and experiences a change of heart.

Performing one’s religious “duty” is at odds with abiding in Christ. The Apostle Paul corrected those with a legalistic approach, asserting, “The only thing

that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6b NIV). God is not simply calling us to obedience, but to whole-hearted devotion. As God says in Proverbs, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live."¹⁰³

Paul urged believers to serve God passionately when he wrote, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11 NIV). The word, "zeal" means "to maintain the spiritual glow."¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Edwards, the Congregational pastor used mightily in the Great Awakening, maintained throughout his ministry that "The religion which God requires and will accept does not consist of weak, dull, and lifeless wishes which scarcely raise us above indifference. In His Word, God insists that we be 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord' (Romans 12:11) . . . Those who deny this may as well throw away their Bibles and get some other rule by which to judge the nature of religion."¹⁰⁵

A lack of passionate spirituality found Adam passively watching Eve as she was seduced by the serpent.¹⁰⁶ Rather than rebuke the serpent, assert God's truth or otherwise intervene to prevent Eve from sinning, Adam's lack of spiritual passion resulted in him sinning right alongside his wife. In fact, 1 Tim. 2:14 says Adam was not deceived, but Eve was. Adam's sin was different—in many ways worse. He knew when Eve offered him the forbidden fruit that this was clearly against God's Word. John Eldridge in his insightful book, *Wild At Heart*, observes, in that moment of time when Eve was fallen, and Adam was not; she had eaten, but Adam still had a choice. Adam now had to choose between Eve—

and God! Adam chose his soul mate—over the Lover of his soul. Adam felt he couldn't go on in life without her. So he pushed the memory of God aside for a moment (haven't we all done it in our own way), and Adam chose Eve over God.

Listen to the music, poetry, and drama devoted to man's obsession with women. Some is romantic and beautiful. However, too often, the line is crossed from appreciation to worship. "She is my life, my everything." Songs sung to God in worship are suggested by couples to sing at weddings to their mate. Interestingly, many pop love songs, with the slightest modification, can become songs of intimate worship of God. Eldridge summarizes this phenomenon by observing, "What goes out to her is not just a man's longing for Eve, but his longing for God as well."¹⁰⁷

True Passion

Passionate spirituality is purely God-focused. Sound doctrine is essential for keeping the church focused on the one true God. Natural Church Development is not designed to assess doctrinal fidelity. Such discernment is left for the church elders or other applicable channels of accountability. However, right doctrine alone does not make a church healthy. The Pharisees demonstrate that being able to define right doctrine is not the same as being righteous. This contrast is amply illustrated in the life of Saul of Tarsus, a "Hebrew of Hebrews" who personally experienced the transforming difference of knowing Christ and the righteousness that comes by faith (Phil. 3:4ff.). Jesus called people to an authentic faith that lies beyond right doctrine when He observed, "These people honor me with their lips,

but their hearts are far from me.” (Mt. 15:8 NIV). God is not simply looking for us to recite truth to fulfill our obligation, but to passionately give our hearts and lives to Him. God assures us in Jeremiah, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”¹⁰⁸

Notice how the Apostle Paul integrates right belief with authentic obedience when he counsels Timothy to “Watch your life and doctrine closely.” (1 Tim. 4:16 NIV). Weary of His people “going through the motions” of religious duty, God prescribed a new heart: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ez. 36:26 NIV).

God’s Spirit breathes spiritual passion into God’s people. “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ez. 36:27 NIV). Spiritual passion is fueled by the Holy Spirit and prayer (Ac 1:8). The early church experienced this reality, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” (Ac 4:31 NIV).

A Greater, Deeper Passion

The Apostle Paul illustrates the life of passionate spirituality when he writes, “Be filled with the Spirit...be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power... Put on the full armor of God... And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...”¹⁰⁹ Paul’s spiritual fervor took the form of

continuous prayer for believers to know God better as the Spirit gives them wisdom and reveals God's purpose.¹¹⁰

Spirit-filled believers who actively seek God curiously search God's Word. Their desire to know God's heart through prayer, study, meditation and obedience keep their spiritual relationship fresh and vibrant. Christians desiring to deepen their spiritual passion should ask, "Am I curious to learn something new from God? Am I thirsty as I approach the Fount of Living Water? Do I open God's Word with expectancy as well as devotion? When is the last time I blocked out two consecutive days for fasting and prayer?" God is longing for you, His Bride, to come away with Him on a marriage enrichment weekend.

Your deepening walk with Christ can be used by God to spur others in your church on to deeper spiritual passion. The Apostle Paul mentored the young pastor Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. [qvb://0/anchor/8](#)For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." (2 Tim. 1:6-7 NIV).

The pastor sets the pace for a church in a variety of areas, including spiritual passion. While passionate spirituality can spread from any member of the congregation, the pastor is positioned to set the tone in weekly worship and throughout the many dimensions of church life. Passionate leaders set aside significant time for prayer, fasting, and meditation upon God's Word to wait upon the Lord for renewed faith, vision and empowerment to pursue divine priorities. The radiance of one who has spent extended time in God's Presence inspires an expectancy that God will show up and move in supernatural ways.

Parishioners are awakened to this passionate dimension of discipleship when they are led by those who incarnate a Kingdom-focused approach to ministry and to the many distractions along the way. A Kingdom perspective is not limited to the concerns and comfort of the individual or local congregation, but is focused on seeking and reaching the lost, hurting, and oppressed with compassion, practical help and eternal hope through the Gospel.¹¹¹

Parishioners desiring to increase the spiritual passion in their church would be wise to gather a team of intercessors to uphold the leadership, ministries, mission and fellowship before God's throne of grace. The power of prayer is too often assumed rather than sought. Such an emphasis on prayer can stimulate the prayer life of the larger membership. A congregation looking to God is poised to experience His power and discover a growing dependence upon Almighty God. Spending time with God draws us closer to Him, positioning us to see more from a Kingdom perspective. As these prayer warriors receive requests and share testimony of God's intervention in the weekly worship service, the congregation is able to "taste and see that the Lord is good." (Ps 34:8 NIV). Experiencing such confidence and trust increases one's passion for God and for His will to be done.

Chapter 4

Functional Structures

Memory Verse: “**The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.**” (1 Corinthians 12:12 NIV)

Unity’s Larger Purpose

Step back and see the church from God’s perspective. All history is nearing the day described in Revelation 7 when people from every nation, language and ethnic group come together to worship the Son of God with one united voice (Revelation 7:9-10).

Every day God leads His church closer to this vision. God lavishes His saving grace on desperately lost people. God then gifts these new creations in Christ to minister in ways that matter eternally. The Holy Spirit unites individuals to accomplish God’s purposes through His church. Most amazing of all is how God coordinates believers, from diverse walks of life, with unique gift-mixes and personalities, to work in harmony with one another to effectively further the Kingdom of God.¹¹²

Unity in the church requires intentional effort. This has always been true.¹¹³ We read in scripture sanctified phrases like the “body of Christ” and the “people of God” with a casual familiarity as though such unity was automatic and effortless. In fact, the New Testament churches, especially in Paul’s letters, reveal

the earthy struggles of living with real life believers in God's New Covenant community.¹¹⁴

Paul urges members to reach beyond their differences. Specifically, the Apostle instructs the strong to bear with the weak in order to build them up (Romans 15:1-2). This follows Jesus' example of humility and service (Romans 15:3). Our union with Christ is life-changing. Beyond the difference Christ's salvation makes in one's life personally, others are transformed as believers serve together in Christian community (2 Cor. 5:17-20). However, choosing the way of godliness is not automatic. For this reason, Paul frequently urges believers to live according to their divine calling. The Apostle's appeal to the Philippian church is compelling, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [qvb://0/anchor/2](#)then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. [qvb://0/anchor/3](#)Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. [qvb://0/anchor/4](#)Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:1-4 NIV).

One in spirit and purpose

Unity is the fruit of God's Holy Spirit flowing freely through believers in interdependent relationships, functioning as one body in Christ's service. We learn from the above text that a healthy body (church) is Christ-focused, with a shared faith and vision (Philippians 2:1-4). Members work toward the same goal

and share the same values. Surrendering to Jesus as Lord is marked by a thankful attitude and sacrificial commitment. Jesus communicated this attitude in terms of shepherds and servants.¹¹⁵ Each cares for others, even at personal expense.

Having the same love

A healthy church is also love-driven. Members share clear, consistent communication (like minded), honor others above self, enjoy fellowship beyond individual tasks or committees, and their relationships are marked by humility, tenderness and compassion.¹¹⁶

Loving relationships are integral to the successful functioning of any church structure. The spiritual fruits of peace, joy and kindness are a refreshing alternative to worldly ways of revenge or political posturing. Unity with Christ calls us to make sacrificial efforts to live in unity in the family of God.

Disagreements between individuals, whether due to personality clashes, power struggles, or differing perspectives can poison the church's atmosphere. Paul appeals to specific individuals to come to an agreement for the sake of the Body and the ministry of the Kingdom (Philippians 4:2).

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians makes a similar plea, "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Corinthians 1:10 NIV). Paul impresses upon the Corinthian church this vision for unity before correcting a deep division in their fellowship that stunted their spiritual growth (1 Corinthians 3:1ff.). This

rivalry diverted their attention from divine empowerment to an unhealthy obsession with human abilities.¹¹⁷ Conflicted churches, whether in Corinth or in modern society, are hindered in their ability to disciple one another to spiritual maturity.¹¹⁸

Unity Precedes Effective Ministry

This focus on unity and Christ's working despite human personality lays the foundation for Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 through 14. Sandwiched in the midst of his teaching on effectively coordinating gifts in the Body of Christ is the renowned "love chapter" of 1 Corinthians 13, further emphasizing the imperative of genuine acceptance and "agape" love for the Body to perform in a healthy manner.¹¹⁹

Even those who cannot do what is prominent in the work of the Body are honored as essential personnel. While in one's own way, some may protest, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong..." (1 Corinthians 12:15 NIV). The truth is that every part matters: from your heart to your hand; from your inner ear to your instep. Scripture says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27 NIV).

Paul develops this further in 1 Thessalonians 5, addressing a wide array of ways to ensure the smooth functioning of church life and ministries (1 Thessalonians 5:12ff.). These instructions include honoring leaders and patiently motivating each member who is not performing to their potential. The Apostle offers a short course on situational leadership when he writes, "warn those who

are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14 NIV).

Giving Structure to Unity

We need structure to function. “The human body,” David Shearman observes, “full of life but with no skeleton, no support structure, would be an awful heap of uncontrollable flesh.”¹²⁰ Sid Buzzell defines structure as that which “addresses the methods by which resources flow through the organization to accomplish work.”¹²¹ Functional structures include the church’s programs, ministries, facility, church culture, communication, organization, and decision-making. “The goal,” as noted by Christian Schwarz, “is to increasingly develop structures in the church that can undergird the process of church development as strongly as possible.”¹²²

Many Complex Systems

“Functional structures” may seem the least spiritual of the 8 Quality Characteristics, perhaps because they are so basic to God’s created order. Every natural system God created is a functional structure: a system that works. God created our physical bodies, planet earth, our solar system, the universe. Each is a precisely crafted system integrated with many other interdependent systems. Were the moon much closer to earth, the tides would deluge every continent.¹²³ Likewise the stars of every galaxy are carefully arranged. The earth revolves around the sun in an orbit sustained simply by the forces of gravity; pretty incredible for a six-sexillion ton planet¹²⁴ spinning on its axis at 1000 mph while

hurtling through space at 18.5 miles per second.¹²⁵ The earth does all this while maintaining a distance from the sun precisely necessary to sustain life, tilted just enough to provide our changing seasons so polar caps don't expand to initiate another ice age, or melt to drown us all. While the earliest inhabitants of earth could not know such details, they still marveled how God "suspends the earth over nothing." (Job 26:7b NIV). The profound complexity of God's many functional systems are a marvel to ponder.

In the same way, one's physical body has many systems to keep it healthy: a digestive system to take in nutrients, a circulatory system to distribute nutrients to every cell and carry away byproducts, and an immune system to fight off disease. There is a sense in which these systems function naturally, "all by themselves."¹²⁶ We may take for granted how naturally our bodily systems each complete their complementary functions until one breaks down: whether a fever, a limp or a heart attack. However, when the system falters, that is, when the body is taken ill, a trained physician who understands how healthy systems function is called to introduce whatever is necessary to bring the system back to health. This remedy may be as simple as a change in diet or as extreme as major surgery.

Likewise, the Body of Christ requires many systems functioning simultaneously for the church to be healthy, strong and viable. We may pay no attention to the way decisions are made, how funds are used or what programs are offered until there is a problem in our congregation. Too often simple attempts to fix the problem serve as our introduction to the complexities of the many interdependent systems.

Assessing and Maintaining Healthy Church Systems

How does one recognize healthy characteristics as well as unhealthy symptoms in the Body of Christ, the local church? While a given church may not become an Olympic athlete, neither does one want to end up a couch potato. What does a healthy church look like? Tracking Paul's body image, a healthy body is able to take in nourishment and utilize that energy to carry out necessary bodily functions to sustain life, to grow, to engage in productive work and to reproduce.

Likewise, in the church of Jesus Christ, the Body of believers must be able to take in spiritual nourishment and apply that effectively to develop the members of the Body so they can engage in effective ministry and outreach. The Church must also be able to reproduce.

Just as the first humans were instructed by God to be fruitful and multiply, the Body of Christ is commissioned to “preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15 NKJV). When we embrace Jesus’ Great Commission as our church’s vision, purpose and passion, we begin to recognize not everything currently done in the church is conducive to that purpose. A church that says “yes” to God’s Kingdom will say “no” to any activity that hinders the realization of that divine purpose. Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Church* explains how a church sifts through its many programs, holding onto only those that clearly fulfill the church’s mission.¹²⁷

If we are thoroughly committed to Jesus’ Great Commission and are blessed with fruitful ministry, our church will not be content to merely sustain its

own life, but begin to reproduce other healthy churches. We recognize the health of a tree by the fruit it bears. God created every plant to reproduce “according to its kind.” (Genesis 1:11-25). Healthy evangelists will witness people coming to faith in Christ. But the true fruit of an evangelist is not a new believer, but another evangelist.¹²⁸ Sunday school classes will mature participants spiritually and attract new members. However, the real fruit of a healthy Sunday school class is to “reproduce after its kind,” that is, launch another healthy Sunday school class. The fruit of a leader is not a follower, but another leader. The fruit of a church is not more members, but another church.

True Health is Costly

Healthy churches function in ways that expand and adapt to accommodate the changes that come with a growing Body. When one’s physical body grows out of a size 8 shoe, a change is necessary. Time to shop for new shoes. Yet, when a group or a church grows out of its current structure, whether that structure is its facility or its organization, there is a tendency to resist change rather than adapt to growth. This tendency typically results in quenching growth, and the group levels off at a size suitable for the existing structure.

Life forms value their own survival and comfort. Jesus taught and modeled a higher value: selfless service, saying, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28 NIV). Jesus’ clear understanding of His life’s purpose enabled Him to push beyond natural self-serving tendencies by sacrificing comfort, by choosing to

wash the feet of his disciples.¹²⁹ Jesus willingly sacrificed his very life on the cross for the sake of accomplishing God's larger purpose of redemption.¹³⁰ As Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." (John 6:38 NIV).

Submitting one's will to God is not optional. As Jesus warned, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21 NIV). The opening line in the book, *The Purpose Driven Life* reads, "It's not about you."¹³¹ The purpose of the church and one's participation in it is all about God and furthering His Kingdom.¹³² Church health requires we embrace a Kingdom focus. A Kingdom focus expands our vision beyond a self-absorbed perspective to see our Christian walk and our church as contributing factors in God's Kingdom purposes. The Kingdom of God is prominent in the New Testament.¹³³ It is not so prominent in many church conversations today.¹³⁴

Commit to a God-Sized Vision

Churches following Christ's example must push beyond mere survival or their own comfort to discern God's purpose for their existence. Core values are those non-negotiable essentials that make a church a church. After defining one's essential doctrines, ask, "If God could have his way, you knew you could not possibly fail and you would never lack the resources, what would your church be doing if it were really doing the will of God?"¹³⁵

These emotionally held values fuel our spiritual passion. Think through what your church would look like in the next few years if you acted on that vision. Write it down. As the LORD says, “Write down the vision and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it... Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3 NIV).

An effective vision statement motivates members to get involved. Victor Hugo said, “There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come.”¹³⁶ The purpose must be big enough to capture everyone’s imagination and inspire sacrificial commitment to make it happen.

After a church agrees on the vision God has for them, a clear, brief, specific mission statement is necessary to define the church’s purpose.¹³⁷ The mission statement needs to be taught and trumpeted, applied and illustrated persistently before the congregation. The text of the mission statement must be familiar to the members, appearing in the church’s newsletter, bulletins, banners, displays, incorporated in preaching throughout the year and highlighted as the motivating force behind each church event or testimony of advancement.¹³⁸

Surrender one’s entire church program, schedule, personnel and budget to God’s sovereignty and the vision He has given one’s church. A healthy church will position itself to give her best resources, staff, energy, and time on the calendar to those ventures most vital to the church’s mission.¹³⁹ A clear understanding of the purpose of one’s church makes it possible to prune ministries that are “good” but not vital to the agreed purpose. Otherwise, the church is distracted or impeded in pursuing God’s vision because she must yield to

perpetuating these other programs. While these programs may have been God's anointed means to advance the Kingdom of God at one time, they may no longer be best suited for God's current vision. God's strategy at Jericho was not the procedure to repeat at Ai.¹⁴⁰ Prune whatever necessary to ensure vision-focused efforts will maximize their impact. On-going evaluation and revision assures continued growth and viability.¹⁴¹ "We've always done it this way" is not a Biblical reason to continue doing what may be familiar but may be a distraction from advancing God's purposes.

History is a tattle-tale to the embarrassment of many who failed to recognize the opportunity afforded by new developments. Marechal Ferdinand Foch, French Professor of Military Strategy stated, "Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value."¹⁴² Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corporation said in 1977, "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."¹⁴³ Western Union, in an internal memo in 1876 noted, "This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us."¹⁴⁴ Each was a missed opportunity for those who could not see beyond the status quo to envision new possibilities.

God Gives the Growth: Get Prepared!

A Kingdom focus helps equip a church to see growth, not as threatening the church's health, but rather as evidence of Holy Spirit vitality in the Body of believers. Can a fresh movement of God's Spirit be put in old wine skins?¹⁴⁵ An

intentional Kingdom focus anticipates growth, apprentices the next generation of leaders and multiplies groups with a vision to reach out still further, anticipating more growth and further regeneration.

We find an expandable, participant-friendly structure illustrated in scripture. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was the first management consultant in recorded history.¹⁴⁶ He advised Moses to empower capable leaders to use their abilities in a functional organizational structure. Delegation enabled a more personal leadership approach to this growing community. The system served multiple purposes. It developed leadership and provided oversight for leaders honing their skills. Difficult cases were referred to the next level. In this way growth and training opportunities were built into the system. This efficient approach to "multi-tasking" enabled the people to be better served and supported. "Effective leaders create a structure that nurtures the health of those they lead."¹⁴⁷ Everyone benefited because Moses was open to advice and to implementing a more functional structure.

Growth: The Fruit of Abiding in Christ

One may think, "Youngsters grow. But after awhile, individuals, like some churches, reach a point where they stop growing." That may be true physically, but not relationally. Individuals grow into parenting relationships, grand-parenting relationships, other mentoring relationships as coaches, advisors, and prayer partners. Nor is one to stop growing spiritually. The longer one walks with Christ, as one's relationship with the Lord deepens, the more passionately one wants to

share Christ with others. In John 15:2 Jesus said any branch that is unfruitful is cut off.

Jesus is looking for fruitfulness in those who abide in Him. A healthy Body of believers will encourage one another to spiritual maturity and fruitful ministry.¹⁴⁸ Churches are wise to ask if they are set up to facilitate the flow of the Spirit, or to frustrate it. When the Holy Spirit motivates people to act upon the church's Godly vision, are structures in place to empower them to proceed so the Body is built up and the Kingdom of God advanced?

The Indispensable Component

To be functional, one's structure must have the Holy Spirit's empowerment. As the church was about to be birthed, Jesus' instructions to his disciples were lean on structural details. However, Jesus was emphatic that they not run ahead but "wait for the gift my Father promised...the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:5 NIV). The Holy Spirit would remind them of all Jesus taught and empower them to faithfully administer with real power. Above all, church health depends on loving relationships among praying believers dependent upon God's sustaining Presence. The essential relationship component the church simply must wait for is the Holy Spirit.

Some assume if one is truly Spirit-led, then structures are irrelevant, pleading, "If God is in it, don't organize the Holy Spirit out of it." It is true that ineffective structures can quench the Holy Spirit. However, realizing the impediment dysfunctional structures can cause makes it imperative that one

remove any “kinks” in the structural “hose” so the Holy Spirit streams through one’s church unencumbered.

Others view traditional church structures as sacred. To make any change in the church structure may be perceived as tampering with something divinely prescribed, an act beneath the dignity of the church. Such individuals may claim, “The constitution says it: that settles it for me.” However, constitutions contain provisions for amendments. Granted, changing structure means a change in procedure. Such changes often bring glitches with them. But the question remains, “Are the present structures functional?” God set the 10 commandments in stone. In His wisdom God chose not to do the same with a detailed church organizational plan. Many principles and examples abound in God’s Word, especially in Paul’s letters, to guide church leaders. But scripture provides no detailed organizational plan.

Paul left the Ephesian church, after investing over three years there, with instructions to elders like Timothy to shepherd God’s people and beware of division and false teaching. Paul cared for people and their leaders. He said, “I commit you to God and to the will of His grace.” (Acts 20:32 NIV). The Spirit of God and the Word of God are the most powerful resources against anything that would undermine the church.

Jesus knew his disciples would face persecution, martyrdom, decline and apostate teaching.¹⁴⁹ Jesus’ strategy to protect his church drew from the greatest resource available to the Body of Christ. Jesus prayed to His Father to protect His people saying, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name

you gave me...My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. [qvb://0/anchor/16](#)[qvb://0/anchor/17](#)
[qvb://0/anchor/18](#)...As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” (John 17: 11-18 NIV).

Scripture also says, “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” (1 Cor 14:40 NIV). Such orderliness requires cooperation and a framework to integrate the many spiritual gifts that come from each member to build up Christ’s church. Structure doesn’t exclude the Holy Spirit. One can be organized and still “Trust God.” One trusts God to provide one’s food. However, this does not mean one will never have to shop, prepare, serve or chew. Faithful stewards of God’s provisions are positioned to make the most of all God supplies. Rather, ask if one’s church’s structure is helping to achieve God’s purposes.

Christ the Only Sure Foundation for any Structure

A common flaw in organizational strategies is following civic or other worldly models rather than Biblical principles and reliance upon Christ to build His church. (Matthew 16). Familiarity with business models from work or American democracy may be expedient. One must beware of distorting the essence and integrity of the church of Jesus Christ by using worldly models. Viewing the church as an organization leads to emphasizing measurable traits such as the number of members, size of facilities and budget. One’s eyes can be diverted from Christ to competition as the motive and measure of success. When

reaching quotas rather than reaching hearts becomes the criteria, spiritual legitimacy is compromised. Instead of asking how to increase our numbers, ask, “what do the scriptures have to say about ministry?”¹⁵⁰

Approaching the church as an organism directs one’s attention to the quality of the Body’s health: issues such as relationships, fruitfulness and spiritual growth. It is admittedly more elusive to quantify faith or the state of one’s heart. However, these qualitative intangibles truly are the soul of the church’s viability. Jim Peterson observes, “The New Testament utilizes...a variety of metaphors to describe the church. A body, a bride, a building, a family, a field, a flock, a house, a temple. I think the Holy Spirit did this to keep us from locking in on a single model.”¹⁵¹

The underground house churches in China thrive, despite persistent persecution. With simple structure and minimal supervision, these churches grow and multiply fueled by their passion for Christ. Yielding to the Holy Spirit, these persecuted saints are heroically dedicated to each other and to the spread of the Gospel, despite whatever personal cost.

Next Steps to More Functional Structures

The congregation must “own” the vision if it is ever to be realized. “Ownership means that the congregation understands the vision, identifies with the vision, is excited about the vision, and acts according to the vision.”¹⁵² Exposing members to other churches effectively pursuing similar ministries awakens and energizes leaders to new possibilities. Securing “buy-in” from key leaders is essential for the church to proceed in unity. Beware of one or two

enthusiasts who would run ahead, bypassing the “gatekeepers” who profoundly influence key segments of the larger congregation. Honoring those in official or unofficial positions of influence with clear two-way communication enhances the likelihood of their support. Keeping everyone on board helps reduce conflict, generate enthusiasm and wider participation, thus minimizing the risk of burnout.

“When God gave Moses the charge of delivering the Israelites from slavery, his ‘first act of communication was to talk to the elders (Exod. 4:29). By getting the already accepted elders onboard, Moses greatly shortened the time needed to spread his message with good credibility.”¹⁵³

There is a flow to the natural vitality of the system. Once the “Body” learns to take a step, it can continue to take steps, to walk, even run with fluid momentum. A person reaches a point where one needn’t think about putting one foot in front of the other. One just does it. That’s very different than the labor-intensive task of programming a robot to walk. Granted, one’s attempts at adapting to growth may be clumsy at first. Like an adolescent experiencing a growth spurt, one may trip some until one gets used to one’s growing “Body.” Functional systems are expandable and adaptable to embrace the new needs that arise and the ever-unfolding opportunities that emerge from a dedicated pursuit of a Godly vision.

Chapter 5

Inspiring Worship

Memory Verse: “**God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.**” (John 4:24 NIV.)

In Pursuit of “Spirit and Truth”

God is on a quest for those who will worship “in spirit and in truth.” What is God looking for? What else does God see?

Spirituality is popular. Even those outside the Christian family long for spiritual experiences, including worship. Various styles of worship music appeal to every taste, from new age to southern gospel to hip hop.¹⁵⁴ One can now do worship a la carte, thinking no deeper than one’s personal preferences.¹⁵⁵ A purely worshipper-focused approach makes “inspiring worship” an oxymoron.

Ultimately, such worship is not about glorifying God but inspiring self.¹⁵⁶ Concern about this self-centered focus is at the heart of the “worship wars.”¹⁵⁷ These polarizing debates over musical styles and the seeker-driven approach reveal a misplaced emphasis on catering to people rather than maintaining worship focused on a holy, deserving God. Meister Eckhart observed, “One of the dangers of finding a way to God is that you come to love that way more than you love God.”¹⁵⁸

A leader’s earnest desire to attract worshippers is hounded by the temptation to relinquish sound worship principles to the hottest crowd-pleasing

approach. If more and more people frequent a church's worship services, is that a sign of compromise or of God's blessing? Jesus provides us with criteria beyond attendance or entertainment to maintain faithful worship. Jesus says those who worship God "must worship in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24 NIV).

Unfortunately truth, like spirituality, has become subjective.¹⁵⁹ "Truth," in this emergent culture, is not propositional, but personal: what works for each individual.¹⁶⁰ The only absolute is the imperative to tolerate other beliefs, faiths, and alternative lifestyles. This is another human-centered approach deviating sharply from the historic Christian faith.

God is on a quest, not simply for worshippers or spiritual people. God is on a quest for those who will worship "in spirit and in truth." N. T. Wright says, "worship is humble and glad; worship forgets itself in remembering God; worship celebrates the truth as God's truth, not its own. True worship doesn't put on a show or make a fuss; true worship isn't forced, isn't half-hearted, doesn't keep looking at its watch, doesn't worry what the person in the next pew may be doing. True worship is open to God, adoring God, waiting for God, trusting God even in the dark."¹⁶¹

God-Inspired Worship

Regardless of our circumstances, God is good and worthy of our worship.¹⁶² Patrick Morley says, "The turning point in our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is."¹⁶³

“Sally Morgenthaler laments the fact that ‘we are not producing worshipers in this country. Rather, we are producing a generation of spectators, religious onlookers lacking, in many cases, any memory of a true encounter with God, deprived of both the tangible sense of God’s presence and the supernatural relationship their inmost spirits crave.’ In true worship God is the audience, and the congregation the participants.”¹⁶⁴

Beyond the self-serving stumblings found in worship today is a quest in the hearts of many people seeking a genuine encounter with the Triune God. There is a growing hunger among many to “experience the power of God in their lives – a power that brings healing and empowers their lives and ministry.”¹⁶⁵ God alone provides what every soul longs for.¹⁶⁶ Worship “in spirit and in truth” is not a formula to figure out but a relationship with a Person, Jesus Christ, who alone is “the Way” to God the Father (Jn. 14:6).

The term worship literally means “worth-ship,” or, as N.T. Wright puts it, “giving God all he’s worth.”¹⁶⁷ As the company of heaven declare to God, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev. 4:11 NIV). John Witlvet echoes John Calvin when he says, “Through public worship—that is, through public prayers, preaching and the celebration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper—God actively worked to draw human beings into divine fellowship. Only the most exalted language could convey the significance of this event.”¹⁶⁸

As fallible people, God’s invitation to worship in spirit and in truth requires supernatural assistance. True worshippers yield to the Holy Spirit within to transform them from prodigals into those who are privileged to behold the glory of the Almighty. The Holy Spirit gives fresh words to our praise and prayers, uniting us in true fellowship with the Lover of our souls in vital ways.¹⁶⁹ True worship “releases us from the grasp of this world” to draw us into the Presence of the Almighty.¹⁷⁰ Inspiring worship ushers people into the otherwise hidden dimension of God “which we penetrate mysteriously, or rather which penetrates us mysteriously, in prayer, in the scriptures, in the breaking of the bread.”¹⁷¹

After salvation, John Calvin holds the only other essential Christian doctrine is worship.¹⁷² Everything else is secondary. The “chief foundation” of the true worship of God “is to acknowledge God to be exactly as God is, namely, ‘the only source of all virtue, justice, holiness, wisdom, truth, power, goodness, mercy, life, and salvation.’ Our duty, then, is to credit God for all that is good, to seek all that is good in God alone, and in our every need to turn to God alone.”¹⁷³

The Sabbath is “made for man” to take sanctuary, privately, and in community with fellow believers. In the very act of creation, God established a pattern for human life by working six days and resting on the seventh (Gen 2:2-3, Ex. 31:15). The degree of reticence one has to observing the Sabbath may be in proportion to the extent of crisis in one’s soul. Many are so enchanted with worldly pursuits that they live “out-of-breath lives.”¹⁷⁴ As Gordon Dahl penetratingly observes, “Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their

work, to work at their play, and to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair, and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot.”¹⁷⁵ Abraham Heschel notes, “Six days we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath, we especially care for the need of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else.”¹⁷⁶

In corporate worship, through singing, scripture, giving, preaching, and prayer believers intentionally align their mind, heart and life with the Lord of the universe. Gathering together is a testimony to unbelievers, encourages fellow believers, and is rehearsal for worship in the hereafter.¹⁷⁷ We join voices with the multitudes depicted in Revelation worshipping Jesus, saying, "Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever" (Rev. 5:11-13 NLT).

Whole-Self Worship

The Apostle Paul says spiritual worship involves one's whole self (Rom. 12:1-2). *The Message* translates Romans 12:1, “Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.” Our “spiritual act of worship”¹⁷⁸ includes offering our bodies to please God in holy living and renewing our minds from worldly thinking to God’s perfect will. Experiencing God and His purpose for life inspires. The psalmist

says of God, “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Ps. 116:11 NIV).

Inspiring worship cannot be limited to Sunday mornings in a sanctuary. Worship that inspires is rooted in lifestyle worship. Lifestyle worship means living in dynamic relationship with our heavenly Father.

Music is repeatedly interwoven into the fabric of lifestyle worship in scripture. The Apostle Paul instructed the Colossians to “let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. [qvb://0/anchor/18](#)And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Col. 3:16-17 NLT). A life yielded to God’s truth and Holy Spirit naturally leads to a heart of worship. Paul told the Ephesians to “let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. [qvb://0/anchor/21](#)Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts” (Eph. 5:18-19 NLT).

Inspiring worship begins with preparation. Preparation for worship includes settling any unresolved differences. Jesus made this top priority when He said, “If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, [qvb://0/anchor/24](#)abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God” (Mt. 5:23-24 MSG).

Preparation begins with attitude. “Choose to focus on [God’s] goodness and mercy, and not on human error or methodology.”¹⁷⁹ Pray for those leading worship that they will be fully yielded to God’s Holy Spirit and divinely anointed. As a worship leader, review scriptures and have the “big idea” in clear focus while praying for God’s Spirit to provide further illumination. Remember who God is and all He has done. Cultivate a grateful heart in order to “enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise” (Ps. 100:4 NIV).

Encountering God is Life-Transforming

Inspiring worship ushers people into the Presence of God, introducing them to the heart of God, motivating them to reflect God’s character in their daily living.¹⁸⁰ We who hope in Christ are “to live for the praise of his glory,”¹⁸¹ and to live “as a representative of the Lord Jesus.”¹⁸² God’s people are called to live holy lives.¹⁸³ As the Apostle Peter says, “As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God’s life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. [qvb://0/anchor/16](#)God said, ‘I am holy; you be holy’” (1 Pt. 1:15-16 MSG). This is a timeless truth.

The psalmist pondered the miracle of approaching a holy God in worship when he asked, “Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false” (Ps 24:3-4 NIV). Rick Warren shares a genuine attitude of worship as he addresses God, “I’m coming to give to you, not

to receive. I desire to seek your face and not your hand. I have no agenda except to minister to you, my Lord (Psalm 41:13).”¹⁸⁴

God is holy, unique, “set apart” from all else. God’s people are to reflect God’s character, to “contradict the Fall,” to live lives unique from others in the world, to be distinguishable by their holiness as the people of God.¹⁸⁵ Hughes Old laments that the church as “the bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle, seems to be a faded vision.”¹⁸⁶ Lloyd Ogilvie says, “The institutional church in America is filled with religious people who desperately need an experience of the living, holy, forgiving, gracious God.”¹⁸⁷

Self-focused worship appeals to God to meet one’s personal needs. God-focused worship, instead of dwelling on the details of our concerns, enumerates and celebrates specific attributes of God our deliverer. This is how the multitude in Revelation 7 worships God, “Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”¹⁸⁸

“The way we worship,” Morgenthaler observes, “is often as much a part of our Christian identity *as whom* we worship—sometimes even more so.”¹⁸⁹ Keeping one’s focus on God above all else enables one to broaden one’s repertoire of worship styles. John Fischer, an accomplished Christian musician confides, “As the church today gets more and more hip--more and more need-oriented, responding to the buttons that people push in their pews--I find myself longing for more of a historical faith. I find myself not wanting to have everything explained to me in simple terms. I’m not even sure I want all my needs met as much as I want to meet God, and sometimes I wonder if he’s really interested in

the noise of our contemporary clamoring. Like my dog who can't seem to get anywhere because he keeps having to stop and scratch his fleas, I wonder if we are so busy scratching where everybody itches that we aren't taking anybody anywhere significant.”¹⁹⁰

“Inspiring worship is not driven by a particular style,” asserts Logan, “but rather the shared experience of God’s awesome presence.”¹⁹¹ John Ortberg summarizes, “The heart of worship is anytime a human being genuinely encounters a living, transcendent, radiantly good God. We are moved to the core of our being. We express it with our hearts, with our voices, with our minds, with our wills. We are moved to surrender our lives and make them a sacrifice which then comes fully to life.”¹⁹² Jeremiah says it best, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13 NIV).

Worship “in spirit and in truth” cannot be reduced to a formula. Remember, we are relating to the sovereign God. Yet, scripture is instructive concerning faithful worship. David, in Psalm 63, details the moment-by-moment dependence of a child of God. Note David’s passion and dependence when he writes, “earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you,” (Ps. 63:1 NIV) as though life is a desert and the only refreshment available is in drawing near to God. David describes raising his hands and singing God’s praises. More telling is his motivation: “Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings” (Ps. 63:7 NIV). God has intervened in David’s time of need. David, this renown leader and military hero unashamedly exclaims, “My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.” (Ps. 63:8 NIV) Like an infant in a snuggly, wrapped close to dad’s

chest, David's security is being intimately linked to his Heavenly Father. His singing and worship are an expression of his very dynamic relationship with God.

Peter instructs believers to crave the pure spiritual milk of God's Word "like newborn babies" (1 Pt. 2:2 NIV). Such a thorough dependence upon God, surrendering to Christ's Lordship, renewing one's mind with God's truth, leads to spiritual growth. The writer to the Hebrews, underscoring how extensively Jesus has identified with our need and is able to sympathize with our weakness, urges believers to confidently approach God's throne of grace (Hb. 4:16). God is ready and willing to help His children.

Hebrews continues that a sincere heart, a cleansed conscience and a purified life are our most appropriate response to God's love (Hb. 10:22). Eddie Gibbs asserts, "worship is designed not to make people feel good about themselves or to help them become better informed about theology and the Bible but to make them holy."¹⁹³ Worship is a response to God's initiative. The goal, Webber notes, is not to cater to individual preferences but to celebrate God's saving intervention in Jesus Christ in a way that worshippers have a "much clearer sense of the power of the gospel at work."¹⁹⁴ The result of receptive hearts, Webber observes, "is a congregation of people who continually experience the power of God in their lives – a power that brings healing and empowers their lives and ministry."¹⁹⁵

A Divine Encounter

“Christian worship of God cannot do without silence, but neither can it do without words,” notes Thomas Oden.¹⁹⁶ Our fast-paced society that now pays to take naps may come to embrace a sanctuary of silence in order to “be still and know … God” (Ps. 46:10 NIV).¹⁹⁷ Gibbs notes, “Worship takes place in a sanctuary, not in an auditorium or a lecture hall. In our secularized society there is a need for holy places… where spiritual power is concentrated.”¹⁹⁸ Silence in worship enables participants to listen for the “still, small voice” of God (1 Ki. 19:12 NKJV).

“The task of pastoral ministry” asserts Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “is, above all else, to arrange the contingencies for an encounter with the Divine.”¹⁹⁹ The purpose of worship, according to Martin Luther, is so that “our Lord himself may speak to us through his holy word, and that we in turn may speak to him through our prayers and hymns.”²⁰⁰ A sanctuary, according to N. T. Wright, “is not a place of retreat from the world but a place of prayer and of prophecy, a beacon to shine God’s light into the world.”²⁰¹

Worship Based on the Word of God

The Christian faith is not innovative, but has been revealed to us by God’s very Word given to us in the Bible. Carl Henry notes, “The content of church proclamation is…not just anything and everything. It is the very specific Word of God… Unless it verbally articulates and communicates the revelation of God, the church has no distinctive right to be heard, to survive, or even to exist.”²⁰² Scripture is the only adequate scalpel to transform a human heart (Hb. 4:12).

The Christian church gathers in order to hear the Word of God preached.²⁰³ “The most inspiring point in every sermon is when the Word of God is read.”²⁰⁴ Hughes Old says, “It is the Word that gathers the church, purifies the church, and nourishes the church. The preaching of the Word is the primary ministry of the church (1 Cor. 12:2f.), and, even more than that, it is the seed of the church (1 Pet. 1:23).”²⁰⁵

John Albert Bengel observes, “Scripture is the foundation of the Church: the Church is the guardian of the Scripture. When the Church is in strong health, the light of Scripture shines bright; when the Church is sick, Scripture is corroded by neglect; and thus it happens, that the outward form of Scripture and that of the Church, usually seem to exhibit simultaneously either health or else sickness; and as a rule the way in which Scripture is being treated is in exact correspondence with the condition of the Church.”²⁰⁶

Preaching God’s Word has been foundational to the inception, spread and continued health of the church. John the Baptist and Jesus Himself proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God as they urged people to get ready. Jesus declared, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mk 1:15 NIV). Jesus mentored his disciples to announce the coming Kingdom of God as he repeatedly sent them out two by two.²⁰⁷ Following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, Peter’s Pentecost sermon witnessed the conversion of 3000 Jews. Others carried “the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.” (Ac. 10:36 NIV).

Prayer

Prayer expresses the rapport one experiences when, as N. T. Wright put it, “a human being goes through the thin veil into the very presence of God, there to be welcomed, to worship, to love, to intercede.”²⁰⁸ Encountering God’s glory and grace may take your “breath away – and offer you God’s breath instead.”²⁰⁹ Words are often distracting when in such awe.

Public prayer gives words to what worshippers already feel in their hearts. When congregants hear their grief, guilt or joy better articulated than they have been able to identify or express, their internal “Amen!” inspires. Oden observes, “Pastoral prayer does not eclipse or diminish the prayers of the laity, but rather, hopes to engender them and breathe into them new life.”²¹⁰

More Inspiring Worship

Worship is a “love affair” with God.²¹¹ Making worship more inspiring requires getting to know God better so one can express love to God more genuinely. Pastors and worship leaders must be diligent students of scripture, theology and the spiritual character of God.²¹² John Witvliet asserts, the “quickest way to make worship relevant is to make it a profoundly true portrayal of the Christian gospel.”²¹³ Faithfulness in submitting oneself, one’s congregation and the entire worship experience to God in prayer is the best preparation for leading others in prayer. Encouraging indicators that worship components are achieving their desired end is when parishioners, instead of complementing the worship team for a “nice song” confide, “through that song I confessed my sin to God” or “through that song I was able to praise God more truly.”²¹⁴ Our greatest joy is not in the music but in encountering God in deep, authentic ways.

Chapter 6

Holistic Small Groups

Memory Verse: “**They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**” (Acts 2:42 NIV.)

Holistic:Discipling the Whole Person to Obedient Faith

Holistic small groups are disciple-making communities ministering to the whole person: spiritually, physically, and socially. In these groups the Gospel of salvation by grace alone is shared so everyone understands what Jesus has done for them. Biblical instruction and application in such an accountability group empowers individuals to live in obedience to God's truth. John Calvin rightly observed, “All true knowledge of God is born out of obedience.”²¹⁵

Holistic ministry is innate to the early church. More than Bible study, these first believers were committed to building up the whole person in a relational atmosphere. These praying, Spirit-filled disciples came together to grow in Christ-likeness. Their “no saint left behind” approach to spiritual maturity was later taught by the Apostle Paul. “The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. It's that simple. That is the substance of our Message. We preach Christ, warning people not to add to the Message. We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity. To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less. [qvb://0/anchor/29](#)That's what I'm working so hard at day after day, year

after year, doing my best with the energy God so generously gives me” (Col. 1:27-29 MSG).

Each One Mature in Christ

New life in Christ is not the final goal but the starting line. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul reveals the mystery of the Gospel: “Christ is in you” (Col. 1:27 NIV). The essence of the Christian faith is to receive Christ by grace through faith. Christ in you is the mysterious essential for spiritual empowerment and life transformation. Not content with initial saving faith alone, Paul’s passion is to present each person mature in Christ.²¹⁶ This is a recurring theme in Paul’s letters to various churches. He wrote to the Ephesians that God has placed various leaders in the church “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [qvb://0/anchor/13](#) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13 NIV). “What would happen for God’s kingdom,” Barna asks, “if we did not consider our job complete when people confess their sins and say a prayer inviting Jesus to be their Redeemer, but would use their new commitments to Christ as a launching pad for a lifelong quest to become individuals who are completely sold out – emotionally, intellectually, physically, spiritually – to the Son of God?”²¹⁷

Biblical Discipleship

Jesus modeled for us a small group community to equip people to live, love and reach out to others like Jesus did. Barna notes, “The Great Commission

is not primarily about evangelism, it is about discipleship: ‘Therefore go and make *disciples* of all nations.’”²¹⁸ Our primary purpose as a church then is to make disciples: people who know and love Jesus so much they live like He did.

Experienced small group directors Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson note, “Following Jesus means following Him into community.”²¹⁹ The first century church did just that, “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Ac. 2:42 NIV). This early community of disciples was thoroughly devoted to Jesus and His will. They gathered together for regular fellowship, to learn God's Word from the Apostles and to pray. God honored the faithful, fervent prayers of His people.²²⁰ Such dependence upon God and the faith community was blessed with exponential growth. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Ac. 2:27b NIV).

Discipleship is more than biblical instruction and application. Oswald Chambers says, “Discipleship means personal, passionate devotion to a Person—our Lord Jesus Christ.”²²¹ John illustrates in his first epistle that true fellowship with one another begins with personal fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. Our passion, then, is to share what we've found in Christ with anyone who will listen. Sharing our faith stories builds bonds of fellowship. Living closely and openly enables accountability to take place. Hypocrisy, or veiled living stifles true fellowship. The apostle John adds this nuance, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 Jn. 1:7 NIV). Fellowship necessitates

authenticity, sharing honest fears, hurts, flaws and failures, only to discover love, support, and grace cheering us on to hold fast to Christ and to be renewed in His Presence. The support of godly community helps us to persevere as we overcome.

Rick Warren assures, “Fellowship is a place of grace, where mistakes aren’t rubbed in but rubbed out.”²²² Our relationship with Christ lifts us up to godly fellowship with one another. The Apostle Paul sums it this way, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, [qvb://0/anchor/2](#)then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Phil. 2:1-2 NIV).

Real Life Disciple Making

In real life, small groups can be difficult to maintain. Life-on-life with real people is demanding ministry. Specialized support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or other recovery or grief support groups are essential to deal with deep-seated issues in people’s lives that exasperate the uninitiated. None the less, it is imperative that the church’s culture be that of a caring, equipping community that every believer experiences as well as assumes responsibility to provide.

Genuinely caring for the small group facilitators is essential for a small group ministry to prevail and flourish. People are drawn to healthy community. Bill Donahue tells of small group leaders who wanted to continue even when their group disbanded, because they didn’t want to miss the care they received from their coach, who led their leaders’ group.²²³ As the Apostle James says, “You can

develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results *only* if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.” (Jas. 3:18 MSG).

What most churches call “fellowship” needs a venue where it can be deepened in order to sustain spiritual life, facilitating a community of discipleship. Christians need to support one another in practical ways, nurturing the real needs of the brothers and sisters closest to them. Discipleship can take place in a one-on-one mentoring relationship, like Barnabas and Paul, or, as Jesus modeled, in a small group setting. Whether the group is a Sunday school class or a home group, developing individuals to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness is of utmost importance, as Jesus expressed in His Great Commission. (Mt. 28:19). Discipleship becomes practical in holistic small groups as life is transferred from member to member by genuine caring, accountability and encouragement. Groups become authentic as members share candid feedback, affirmation and mutual prayer support. Applying Biblical instruction on forgiveness, trust and burden-bearing within such intimate circles is how Jesus discipled the Twelve.

Changed Lives Change the World

Holistic small groups are evangelistic, introducing individuals to Christ and to the people of God. Unchurched people typically respond more positively to an invitation to meet in a home group than to attend a service in a church building. A group of up to a dozen people makes it possible to get acquainted at a more personal level, to pray for specific personal concerns, respond to individual needs, discover potential and develop each person according to each one’s spiritual giftedness. Such groups are responsive to guests and are frequently blessed with one or more newcomers. Group members see beyond their circle to the larger vision of reaching the world for Christ. Members take personal responsibility to invite unreached friends, neighbors or co-workers. Bible study focuses on application to make members more Christ like and their faith contagious. Changed lives change the world. An inwardly focused Bible Study group doesn’t impact the world very much.

Holistic small groups are ideal settings for people to discover complementary gifts to team up to serve others, whether caring for needs in the neighborhood, in larger society, or global mission. If that sounds overly ambitious, remember many groups become ingrown and stagnant because they lack adequate vision. Realistically, in a setting offering both, individuals stayed in

personal growth groups for three years before participating in service-driven groups.²²⁴ Inspiring illustrations of holistic ministries as well as step-by-step action plans to implement comprehensive biblical discipleship and outreach are well presented in Ron Sider's book, *Churches That Make A Difference*.²²⁵

Preparing for Growth

Holistic Ministry is an apt description of the overall life of any healthy church. Churches with groups that address the compelling needs facing individuals in the community with redemptive truth and genuinely loving fellowship can anticipate a steady stream of new group participants. Healthy groups anticipate growth like an adolescent boy anticipates shaving. Community is so vital to church health. Individuals, like Legos™, can only handle so many connections before becoming overloaded. For the church to sustain healthy community as it effectively reaches the lost, it must incorporate these new believers in a viable environment of fellowship, instruction and nurture. The most natural way to do this is to continue to raise-up leaders who are maturing in their faith to disciple these new groups.

Holistic small groups intentionally apprentice new leaders from the outset to facilitate multiplying groups.²²⁶ Groups do not divide, but multiply. Many times people are so impressed with the vitality of their growing group that they opt to not mess with it. Such groups may grow larger, but find they cannot maintain vitality when members are “lost in the crowd.” These groups tend to level off at about a dozen members, but by then they have lost their outreach

focus. If a group will not multiply on its own, it will shrink by attrition. A church, like a small group, will shrink to the size where it can meaningfully care for the needs of all its active members. A church cannot sustain growth without the addition of new small groups to nurture these newcomers. Small groups can harden into cliques unless participants keep in mind an organic perspective. The Body of Christ, like one's physical body, is a collection of small cells. The Body of Christ needs healthy cells that grow and multiply for the Body to be built up. As we see in the book of Acts, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Ac. 2:47b NIV).

It may be true that deeper bonding takes place by continuing with a core group of friends. However, when a group fails to multiply, the larger Body loses the fruit of these vital believers who keep to themselves rather than continuing to reach out to others. Raising-up new leaders and forming new groups provide authentic rapport for each participant. If there is one particularly significant relationship, start a new group with that individual. Holistic small groups must never lose sight of their connection with the larger Body of Christ. Scripture teaches, "In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Ro. 12:5 NIV). Healthy groups look beyond their personal comfort to the health of the larger church and Christ's commission to bring in the harvest (Lk. 10:2).

Growing to Maturity in Christ

Holistic small groups provide a workable setting where the spectrum of discipleship can take place. Within their small group growing disciples find a solid base of prayer, encouragement, feedback, Biblical instruction and discernment as they apply Biblical principles to the complexities of life. Group members can learn to pray conversationally and develop leadership potential while being apprenticed by more seasoned saints. One-on-one prayer partnerships or mentoring relationships can grow naturally from small groups. An experienced mentor, the apostle Paul urged, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Ti. 2:2 NIV).

Rick Warren speaks of different levels of fellowship, the simplest being the “fellowship of sharing and fellowship of studying God’s Word together. A deeper level is the fellowship of serving, as when we minister together on mission trips or mercy projects. The deepest, most intense level is the fellowship of suffering, where we enter into each other’s pain and grief and carry each other’s burdens. The Christians who understand this level best are those around the world who are being persecuted, despised, and often martyred for their faith.”²²⁷

Paul, an apostle acquainted with suffering, said, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [qvb://0/anchor/11](#)and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” Phil. 3:10-11 NIV). Fellowship with God and with Christ is not all laughter over coffee and donuts. This “fellowship of suffering” intimates the cost of discipleship to advance the Kingdom of God in this fallen

world. Like a nation at war, spiritual conflict requires unity and morale building. Small groups are no substitute for one's personal devotions and rapport with the Lord. However, in light of our mission, small groups are indispensable.

In order to reach the world for Christ and present *each one* mature in Christ, believers must pray for massive numbers of workers for the Harvest. This requires what may be a new perspective. Pastors and other leaders must "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12 NIV). This is the Biblical alternative to the overworked pastor-centered model in many churches. Seen in this context, we realize that "leadership development and coaching those leaders is the whole ball game."²²⁸ Many churches have not traditionally operated this way. Making this adjustment one may discover that few feel comfortable or called to leadership. Fear of failure, embarrassment, or just the added pressure and preparation may cause some to hold back. Better to see oneself as Christ's point-person in a strategic position. One must be convinced Christ can transform one's community through the light of one's ministry. The people who come to Christ, the leaders who emerge, the prayer covering that God honors with His Presence, power and spread of genuine revival should motivate every believer to "give of your best to the Master."²²⁹

God is not looking for extraordinary people, just average folk. God is looking for ordinary people who believe in an extraordinary God. Its God's ability working through us that will bring God's kingdom in its fullness. Small groups provide the relational 'glue' that enables people to step out of their comfort zone to take a risk for God. Even if one's performance is less than stellar, mentors see

the individual's heart and growth as the real measure of success. In this way, Christian fellowship enables the Church to utilize all the "vitamins" and resources God has placed in the Body in its various members to enable the church to carry on life-transforming ministry and to effectively resist heresy.²³⁰ As scripture teaches, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pt. 4:10-11 NIV). George Barna notes, "True discipleship creates Christians who aggressively pursue spiritual growth rather than passively experience spiritual evolution."²³¹

The Heart of Discipleship: Community

Our mobile society, ironically, is riddled with many isolated people. Our independent mentality and affluence give us more options. We often choose to be alone, whether as teens opting to drive rather than take the school bus, or commuters shunning the car pool. The military appeals to Gen-Y with the slogan, "An Army of One." Our self-centered and increasingly isolated society is evident even in "Small Town America," as oldsters lament how people don't "neighbor" like they used to. Record sales of Prozac for unprecedented numbers of stress-related disorders reveal something amiss in our American human experience. Societies the world over punish human beings by taking them out of community

and confining them behind prison bars. In extreme cases, one is sentenced to “solitary confinement.” Excessive aloneness can actually be psychologically damaging. The one thing in all God’s creation that was not good was for the man to be alone Gen. 2:18.

While there is this tendency toward independence, people also long for community. This “community gene” is self-evident and crosses cultures.²³² Christians need to connect with the universal human desire to be known and cared about. We are called to embrace our membership in the family of God and then to reach out to the lost. The apostle Paul understood God’s heart when he wrote, “His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.” (Eph. 1:5 NLT).

The Gospel is all about relationships. Scripture calls us to open our hearts and our homes to each other so Jesus can be central to our life, “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Pt. 4:9 NIV). Opening our home, or making space in our weekly schedule for a small group meeting is the way to discover deeper discipleship and applied Christianity. Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, is emphatic about this. “Every Christian needs to be involved in a small group within their church, whether it is a home fellowship group, a Sunday school class, or a Bible study. This is where real community takes place, not in the big gatherings.”²³³

George Barna observes, "Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program or set of activities, but stunningly few churches have

a church of disciples.²³⁴ Everyone who enters a small group is waiting to be discovered. Group members must see in each participant someone created in God's image, precious and unique. People need to know they are loved by God and be given opportunity to speak to God in prayer and to receive Christ's gift of redemption through repentance and faith. Their small group can partner with this new child of God to discover her gifts for ministry and guide her to meaningful opportunities to serve. A new believer's need to be loved and enfolded into the family of God is a primary function of small group fellowship. The best teaching needs to be validated with relationship. Sunday school teachers as well as small group leaders need to touch the lives of group participants beyond group gatherings. Loving relationships, covered in another chapter, overlaps here.

Jesus said it best, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (Jn. 13:35 NIV). The church is to be a fellowship of love, where the world will recognize the difference Jesus makes by the love we have for one another. However, one cannot possibly love all the members at church as deeply as one loves one’s own family. The breadth of Godly love is expressed in the many Biblical commands we are to express to “one another” in the family of God. We are to love one another, pray for one another, encourage one another, admonish one another, greet one another, serve one another, teach one another, accept one another, honor one another, bear each other’s burdens, forgive one another, submit to one another, and be devoted to one another. Whew! And the list goes on! While we can have a genuine positive regard for our church family, it is beyond the ability of any one person to adequately “one another” all the others

in a church, whether that congregation numbers 50 or in the thousands. That's the genius for forming small groups. Here, one can draw near to a handful of brothers and sisters in Christ, get better acquainted, and begin to care for them in ways that weren't available before spending time together. If each member would commit to such fellowship, Christ's Body would be built up in love as scripture says, from Christ "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:15 NIV).

Chapter 7

Need-oriented Evangelism

Memory Verse: **When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.** [qvb://0/anchor/37](#) Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. [qvb://0/anchor/38](#) Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9:36-38 NIV.)

Relating the Gospel

The Gospel Jesus shared was more than words. Jesus embodied the Gospel’s compassion as he reached out to those in need. Jesus responded to their need by healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding the hungry, and teaching the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd.²³⁵

Many times, like Jesus’ first disciples, the needs encountered get shrugged off as someone else’s business. Remember in Matthew 15, after three days of ministering to people in a remote place, Jesus knew the crowds had exhausted their supply of food. When Jesus posed this dilemma to The Twelve, they replied, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?” (Mt. 15:33 NIV). Rather than send them off to fend for themselves, Jesus fed all 4000 in the crowd with 7 loaves and a few small fish! (Mt. 15:32-38).

The Gospel Jesus shared causes us to see all of life in a new way. We have Good News to share with a world that needs it. Evangelism, or sharing the Gospel, is not merely an event where we lead people in a prayer of faith. That awesome privilege is just one among the many steps a person takes toward Christ. Sharing the Gospel involves a relationship that helps people take their next step to trust Jesus as the Way to find new Life. Evangelism is highly relational. Rapport and trust are necessary not only for a Christian witness to be heard, but also to follow-up a faith decision in order to help the new believer understand the Christian faith, integrate Christ's teaching into their life and grow to spiritual maturity.²³⁶

One may not have much experience healing leprosy or feeding thousands of people in the middle of nowhere. So much the better. The Gospel is not about one's ability, but simply one's availability. Begin each day asking God for the ability to see His opportunity to bring Jesus to someone. Anticipate God supplying His power to do exactly what needs to be done.

As a new creation in Christ, believers are gifted and commissioned to live a new life surrendered to one's Savior, Jesus Christ and focused on sharing the Gospel of reconciliation. As Paul taught the Corinthians, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20 NIV). Telling others the difference Christ makes in one's life not only introduces them to the Savior, but also enriches the believer's understanding and spiritual maturity. Paul underscores this benefit as he greets his friend, Philemon, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (Phil. 1:6 NIV). Helping others understand why they need Christ exposes Christians to the needs and issues faced by those without the hope of the Savior.

Many churches are insulated from the needs in their own neighborhoods.²³⁷ When Christians realize that “the purpose of the church is to be an instrument for redemption,” they are poised to discover the Biblical concept of servant evangelism.²³⁸

Reaching Out

Stepping out of one’s comfort zone to help those outside the church reaches hearts that have been hardened by Christians whose witness was “all talk.” As one member of the Socialist Agnostic party said after experiencing God’s love through Christian strangers, “I have heard people talk and talk and talk about God for a long time and have opposed them. I determined a long time ago they weren’t real in their love, so he must not be real. But today, this is the first time I have *experienced* any of God’s love. What I have seen here is real!”²³⁹

Some approach evangelism through the example of Andrew, who is repeatedly bringing people to Jesus.²⁴⁰ Many Christians think of evangelism as convincing non-believers to attend church services or programs.²⁴¹ However, Jesus did not erect a stone temple and invite people to visit him there. Rather, Jesus went to where the people were. His compassionate approach to ministry addressed people’s deepest need and drew crowds to Him wherever He went.²⁴² Following Jesus’ example, Philip, Paul and countless missionaries illustrate how the task is not to bring people to Jesus but rather take Jesus to them.²⁴³ In no way does this imply compromising the Gospel message. However millions of unreached Americans have no interest in church and no intention of coming to

any church program, no matter how appealing.²⁴⁴ Jesus said to pray that God would send laborers into the harvest fields. God's workers go to those places where people need to encounter the Gospel. Jim Peterson observes, "The believer is strategically positioned inside the marketplace, the neighborhood, and the institutions of our society. He or she is at the scene of the disaster when it is happening, is there at the moment of opportunity, to embrace and serve people as the occasion arises. The believer is the key to penetrating our society."²⁴⁵

Believers have lived in the midst of the harvest fields for centuries. While Christian influence has had positive effects, the church has failed to keep up with population growth in passing on the faith to the next generation.²⁴⁶ Rather than reaching more in this nation for Christ, the number of Christians in every county is now less than it once was.

The church is still called to "go" and "make disciples." Now is the time to revisit God's Word and discern how to do so more faithfully. Since churches typically have members living and working among those without a relationship with Christ, members must be equipped to reach out more effectively. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for workers to go into the harvest field (Matthew 9:38). That prayer may first be answered by the one praying! Pray for opportunities to share one's faith and to be alert to spiritual needs encountered each day.²⁴⁷ As God provides these praying saints a heart for the harvest, they will notice each soul comes with a mind, a body, and a personality.

The Whole Gospel for the Whole Person

To reach the whole person, evangelism must follow Jesus' example of addressing people's physical and social needs as well as their spiritual need. Jesus healed the paralytic so that he and everyone in the watching crowd might come to know forgiveness in Christ (Mt. 9:2-8). We follow Jesus' example through need-oriented evangelism.

Consider who in one's life is like this fellow confined to a mat. Their mat may not be paralysis. It may be alcohol, or a fear of failure, or a broken heart that makes it tough to trust people anymore.²⁴⁸ One's mat is whatever keeps one confined. Such people need a few friends to pick them up, mat and all, and introduce them to Jesus.

Paul teaches believers to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2 NIV). We come alongside those who are confronted with issues too great to handle on one's own.²⁴⁹ This is "incarnational ministry."²⁵⁰ By living out the love of Christ in ways that address the real needs of others, we discover the heart of evangelism, which as the Apostle Paul notes, is "not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Cor. 2:4 NIV). Wayne Grudem affirms, "This evangelistic work of declaring the gospel is the primary ministry that the church has toward the world. Yet accompanying the work of evangelism is also a ministry of mercy, a ministry that includes caring for the poor and needy in the name of the Lord."²⁵¹ Caring for the needy in the context of spreading the Gospel is a recurring New Testament theme.²⁵² Whether feeding the homeless or helping the neighbor kid work through

her parent's divorce, followers of Jesus offer genuine compassion, practical help and eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

Many active church members are not prepared for this Divine Calling.²⁵³ Faithful churches will “equip the saints for the work of ministry” by casting God’s vision, teaching Biblical truth and necessary skills, and providing constant encouragement as believers step out into significant Kingdom outreach (Eph. 4:12 NRSV). Small group settings provide a workable setting for training, support and accountability as these disciples then scatter to be salt and light to their unbelieving friends.²⁵⁴

People tend to be most open to the Gospel at points of transition, including the birth of a child, graduation, marriage, moving into the community, divorce or the death of a family member. They are also often open during times of crisis, including sickness, marriage problems, incorrigible youth, or loss of a job. One group may have a passion for grief care while another specializes in mentoring engaged or newly married couples. A climate of outreach needs to involve the overall church community. While not everyone will get involved in “front line” ministry, prayer warriors provide foundational support as ministers impact souls for eternity. Children can make “care mugs” filled with goodies for others to take on visits. Involving the young or timid in support roles enables them to embrace the vision, be involved and ultimately expand their participation. A warm, welcoming congregation can help those making that huge step out of the world into the family of God inviting, safe, and reassuring.

[qvb://0/anchor/3qvb://0/anchor/4qvb://0/anchor/5](#)Coming to the aid of others is not to give the one ministering a sense of superiority or to enable an unhealthy, overly dependent relationship.²⁵⁵ The apostle Paul continues in Galatians 6:5, “for each one should carry his own load.”²⁵⁶ In order to be healthy, each person must deal with what is within one’s ability to handle.

Jesus approached a lame man, asking, “Do you want to get well?” (Jn. 5:6b NIV). Jesus modeled for us His approach to helping people help themselves. When the man lamented to Jesus that he had no one to help him, Jesus instructed him to, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk” (Jn. 5:8b NIV). As the man experienced healing, he took the initiative to help himself to the new life Christ gave him.

“Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you’” (Jn. 5:14 NIV). Jesus followed up his need-oriented ministry to speak into the life of this man concerning his spiritual condition.

Whatever physical needs are met, one’s task is not complete until the whole Gospel is shared. God alone offers true healing.²⁵⁷ Presenting the Gospel message requires prayerful preparation and being alert to the most appropriate presentation to help those served move closer to Jesus. Michael Allen, pastor of Moody Memorial Church notes, “Although the very essence of the message, namely, who Jesus is and what He did, cannot change, the presentation of the message must.”²⁵⁸

Need-oriented evangelism shares the Gospel message in a way that addresses the need of the individual. Philip, led by the Holy Spirit, asked the Ethiopian Eunuch, who rode by in a coach reading the prophet Isaiah, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Ac. 8:30 NIV). This leading question addressed the man’s perceived need for understanding and clarity, which he asked Philip to provide. The result was a life changed for eternity.

One thing Christians and non-believers have in common is both are uncomfortable with witnessing.²⁵⁹ Discerning how to broach the subject of spiritual matters is best determined by assessing the person’s readiness to hear. William Fay in his book, *Share Jesus Without Fear* offers these five questions, which are simply to be asked, without correcting or critiquing one’s response.²⁶⁰ The recommended reply for the witness to offer upon hearing each answer is, “hmmmmm.” The questions are:

1. Do you have any kind of spiritual beliefs?
2. To you, who is Jesus Christ?
3. Do you think there is a heaven or hell?
4. If you died, where would you go? If heaven, why?
5. If what you are believing is not true, would you want to know?

These questions are not offered as a formula, but as innocuous conversation pieces to guide one’s approach to leading an individual from where they are to embracing the Gospel. The fifth question, when answered affirmatively, grants permission to address a receptive heart.

Robert Coleman in his classic work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* notes that society does not need better methods, but credible witnesses to share the incredible Good News of Jesus Christ.²⁶¹ Dick Innes notes, “Being a Christian and being an effective witness for Christ is to experience God’s love, acceptance, and forgiveness, and to communicate this to every life we touch.”²⁶² Paul prays for the church in Colosse, “that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work” (Col. 1:10 NIV). Good fruit is the evidence of true health.

Healthy churches consist of believers who are so grateful for the transformation Christ has made in their lives that they look for ways to introduce others to Jesus. Effective evangelism is that which focuses not on the believer’s need to witness, but on considering the recipient’s needs and how the Gospel addresses their deepest longings. Need-oriented evangelism opens people’s hearts to Christ’s redeeming love.

Chapter 8

Loving Relationships

Memory Verse: “**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.** [qvb://0/anchor/35](#) **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**” (John 13:34-35 NIV.)

Authentic Loving Fellowship

All one ever really needs to know about life is learned in—Sunday school! Youngsters interweave their fingers to recite, “Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the door and see all the people!” These close-knit, wiggling fingers symbolize God’s love of unified community. God calls His people to be like-minded, loving, supportive, and united in oneness.²⁶³

Speaking to believers, Jesus teaches in John 13 that love begins in God’s family, among the fellowship of believers, as a testimony to the world of the transformation God makes in the lives of those who live for Him. God’s design is to not merely live in our hearts individually, but to build us together into an interdependent fellowship, the Body of Christ, where God’s Spirit is at home and clearly evident (Eph 2:22).

Authentic loving fellowship doesn’t happen naturally. Scripture teaches believers to choose to love, even when we don’t feel loving (1 Jn. 4:21, 10-11). We are not simply encouraged to love. Love is commanded. In fact, love is the

greatest of all commandments.²⁶⁴ Our love for others validates our love for God is genuine (1 Jn. 4:20).

Love is also an attitude: a humble, servant attitude that looks to care for others (Jn. 15:9-17). Children wonder “what’s in it for me?” The immature child in us is focused on being cared for. Spiritual maturity leads us to look for ways to care for others.

John Wimber says, “People come to church for many reasons but they stay for only one... relationships.”²⁶⁵ Rick Warren says:

“Today’s church needs to be bathed in unselfish, loving, accepting hospitality... in Webster’s Dictionary, the definition for hospitable is wedged between the word ‘hospice,’ which is a shelter, and the word ‘hospital,’ which is a place of healing. Ultimately, this is what we offer when we open our home in the true spirit of hospitality: we offer shelter; we offer healing.”²⁶⁶

Love is the distinguishing mark of living a Christian life. Jesus sets the bar infinitely high when He says, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (Jn. 13:34 NIV). Jesus loved in selfless ways that humble our most sincere efforts. We need Christ’s supernatural empowerment to love as He loved. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” One way we live for Christ is allowing Him to love others through us.

Honest loving relationships are essential for health and spiritual growth. Living a healthy Christian life is not automatic. We need the ongoing work of God’s Holy Spirit as we apply God’s Word in loving relationships with fellow believers (1 Pt 1:22-23). Those who love us and who genuinely know us can

support our spiritual growth as they frequently remind us who we are in Christ at strategic moments. When we live out God's truth in loving relationships, God works in life-changing ways. Anne Bierling has discovered, "students grow in their faith through relationships, wounded people heal in relationships, and unbelievers come to the Lord through relationships."²⁶⁷

People cannot adequately connect one-on-one when gathered for worship in congregations numbering more than a dozen. Small groups provide opportunities to put love into practice with real people. A key to turning spectators into participants is establishing loving relationships.²⁶⁸ The reason people stay at a church, serve, lead, and give are all based on relationship: their relationship with God and with others. Bonds between people help solidify member's commitment to a particular church far more significantly than any pastor, worship leader or program.

Developing true Christian fellowship takes time and commitment. People need opportunities to interact personally beyond the Sunday morning crowd. Even a small group program meeting weekly for a season may not approach the deepest reaches of fellowship, especially if groups reform annually. Believers seeking depth of relationship must be willing to sacrifice other life pursuits, convinced developing genuine fellowship is the most important aspect of the Christian life; akin to a loving relationship with God (Mt. 22:37-39). To rephrase the greatest commandment: the most important thing in life is developing a loving relationship with God and with other people. As Gary Smalley puts it, "Life is relationships. The rest is all details."²⁶⁹

New Testament Bible Study began as a group encounter. When the church was birthed, the New Testament was not available to read, but was being lived out remarkably by all who bore the name of Christ. Acts 2 says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Ac 2:42 NIV). Attending to God’s Word was a relational experience. These first disciples enjoyed the apostles’ teaching in a personal setting with opportunities for asking questions of the apostles and observing their lives. How different from today’s more studious approach to personal Bible study. The early church studied God’s Word as an interactive community.

These new believers devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching. Their very next devotional priority was to “the fellowship:” faith lived out up close and personal with real people. This testimony of the first century church shows Christianity requires authentic community. If one interprets “breaking of bread” as communion, fellowship comes before the sacrament and prayer! Even the Lord’s Supper was a fellowship meal in those days. Today, for expediency’s sake, individuals enjoy less than a bite and barely a swallow of the elements in their own pew. What Spiritual anointing awaits churches that rediscover the vitality of fellowship so prominent in the church in the book of Acts.

The Greek term Luke uses for fellowship is *koinonia*, meaning association, fellowship, brotherly unity or close relationship.²⁷⁰ *Koinonia* is also used to describe the marriage relationship, ideally, the most intimate community two people can share. This term further suggests generosity, expressed as a community of sharing as the church in Acts demonstrated by holding their

possessions in common, providing for anyone in need (Acts 2:4-45; 4:32-35).

This community of sharing eventually reaches beyond the local fellowship to support missionaries and needy believers in other regions.²⁷¹ The fullness of *koinonia* results in ministry partnering and missionary outreach (Phil. 1:3-7).

The presence and fullness of Christ in the church is not merely pious spiritual talk, but the outworking of faithful *koinonia* in the Body of Christ. Christ, the head of the church, holds no perfunctory position. As our exalted sovereign, Christ serves as the control center and guiding force of our life together (Eph. 1:22-23). True fellowship, or *koinonia*, is built upon discipleship, where God's Word is taught and integrated into everyday living. This holistic community life also develops and channels parishioners' ministry gifts in the fellowship of the church and in its outreach. Preparing God's people for works of service (Eph. 4:12) enables them to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13 NIV)."

The Greek Old Testament does not speak of fellowship (*koinonia*) in the sense of an intimate relationship with God, due to the Hebrews' keen awareness of God's transcendence.²⁷² However, in the New Testament, the term fellowship (*koinonia*) refers to one's relationship with God almost as much as with other believers.²⁷³ Fellowship with God empowers believers for holiness and perseverance in trials. "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. [qvb://0/anchor/10](#)God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Cor. 1:8-9 NIV).

Gorman says, “God is a person enjoying and pursuing relationships.”²⁷⁴ Our Triune God, enjoying fellowship in the Godhead, calls His children into the fellowship of the church to display His character, mutuality and oneness.²⁷⁵

No true fellowship can be shared with unbelievers.²⁷⁶ The beloved apostle, in his first letter, establishes that human fellowship requires a common acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The goal is not simply human relationships, but a community of believers whose primary fellowship is with God through Jesus Christ. “And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 1:3 NIV).

People need relationships. Deep within every human being is the desire to be known and to know others. God, who first loved us, initiated relationship with us. We are created in God’s image, designed to reflect His character in our relationships with others. Julie Gorman notes, “Relating is at the heart of knowing God. Relating is also at the heart of becoming the people of God.”²⁷⁷ Rick Warren says, “church is not something we go to, rather it’s something we belong to—a family of God’s people.”²⁷⁸

Godly living makes human fellowship possible. “[qvb://0/anchor/6](#)If we claim to have fellowship with [God] yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. [qvb://0/anchor/8](#)But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 Jn. 1:6-7 NIV).

Ralph Martin says, “The ‘shared life’ depends primarily on God who by his Spirit joins the separate believers together.”²⁷⁹ Christ alone makes the union of

all the diverse members of the Body of Christ harmonious. As A. W. Tozer put it, “One hundred pianos are never more closely tuned to each other than when they are tuned to the same tuning fork.”²⁸⁰ Our oneness with Christ enables grace and love to flow from Him through us to our Christian family.

The Rest of the Story

Many have experienced enough community to realize the actual experience of community takes a lot more work and maturity than one might first think. Henry Nouwen was right, “Community is the place where the person you least want to live with, lives.”²⁸¹ Yet it is in community where one can truly grow. Community is where believers actually put into practice their memorized Bible verses and the truths they mentally affirm. Faith and love grow together (2 Th. 1:3). God is able to do the extraordinary through ordinary believers living out the Christian faith in community. Daily fellowship in the early church won the hearts and souls of their community (Ac 2:46-47). The church in the first century humbly, yet boldly infiltrated their society, attracting unbelievers to faith in Christ, causing onlookers to stand in awe of God’s Presence among them.²⁸² Church harmony gives credibility to community outreach. In many direct as well as unintentional ways the witness of the early church let the world know Jesus was God’s anointed Messiah (Ac 2:43-47).

God makes everyone unique (1 Cor. 12:4ff.). Differences are the strength of the body of Christ. Complementary gifts and perspectives enable believers to do more together than they ever could separately.

Collaborating with a diversity of gifts is the ideal. Life is not lived in the ideal. Individual differences can be frustrating. Without any intent to harm, people are still hurt when others avoid them or react in frustration, grumbling or anger. The Apostle Paul writes from prison, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3 NIV). Paul’s phrase, “bearing with one another in love” assures us love is neither automatic nor easy. We are to patiently bear with whatever imperfections others have as we mature into a strong, growing church, with strong, growing members who are all involved, serving together, and caring about one another.

The Apostle Paul’s plea echoes Jesus prayer just before He suffered, that believers would be unified (Jn 17:20-23). In fact, Ken Sande notes that every New Testament epistle “contains a command to live at peace with one another.”²⁸³ The Greek word translated “make every effort” means to strive eagerly, earnestly, diligently. One training gladiators to fight to the death in the coliseum might use this word, coaching these gladiators to “Make every effort to stay alive in there!” Likewise, we as Christians must strive earnestly for peace and unity. “Obviously, token efforts and halfhearted attempts at reconciliation,” Sande cautions, “fall far short of what Paul had in mind.”²⁸⁴

The family of God, like one's nuclear family, is given rather than chosen. One cannot choose one's siblings, for example. Love compels us to "accept one another," even those who are not our type (Rom. 15:7 NIV). An attitude of love prods us to drop our prejudices and labels. Even in God's family, maturity requires believers to surrender pigeon holes such as "charismatic," "liberal" or "fundamentalist" to dare to encounter each individual in their unique complexity.²⁸⁵

The Apostle James prods us to grow from superficial socializing to real fellowship, where one's prayer requests turn deeply personal (Jas. 5:16). Some are masters at caring for others to the neglect of caring for one's own soul. Real fellowship includes attending to one's deepest spiritual needs. Genuine fellowship means sharing heart to heart, not about someone not in the group, but about one's honest feelings, fears, doubts, hurts, mistakes, and need for prayer and accountability. Can we dare to admit our frustrations with Christian fellowship in order to purify our hearts and genuinely love our spiritual family in all its diversity? The body of Christ is uniquely equipped to provide that kind of fellowship. As the Apostle John writes, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, . . . If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves."²⁸⁶ Jesus invites us into His Light of intimate fellowship. As Rick Warren notes, "the world thinks intimacy occurs in the dark, but God says it happens in the light. Darkness is used to hide our hurts, faults, fears, failures, and flaws. But in the light, we bring them all out into the open and admit

who we really are.”²⁸⁷ Such authenticity calls for real courage and humility.

Healthy, honest, knowing and being known, without fear, is Godly community.

God’s will is for His church to be a family of believers, a unified Body, where God’s Spirit is at home and clearly evident. By connecting with other believers in authentic relationships, the Holy Spirit takes God’s word of truth that is in our heads and draws it out of us into our relationships and everyday lifestyle. We grow from being simply Biblically knowledgeable to becoming Biblically faithful. Leaving an isolated faith to enter into authentic Christian fellowship leads to Spirit-empowered Christians working together to accomplish greater purposes that are far beyond what any one would attempt individually, yet are truly worthy of the awesome God we serve.

Satan hates oneness. Beginning with the first human beings in the Garden of Eden, Satan has wormed his way into God’s family to put a wedge between people. Adam and Eve, after following Satan’s advice, found themselves hiding from God, distant from each other and casting blame. In fact, God’s Word is embarrassingly transparent about the breaches of community that can be found in every generation since. Broken relationships and hurt are not the problem. A lack of forgiveness or a failure to confront differences, resulting in strained relationships, is more diabolical than many realize. Perpetuating an attitude of indifference, or rehearsing reasons for keeping one’s distance from fellow believers, reveals an ignorance of the devil’s scheme. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the

powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12 NIV).

The church is a hospital for sinners. Just as the doctor making hospital rounds does not criticize newly-admitted patients for not already making a full recovery, believers must extend grace to fellow parishioners God is perfecting. A hospital is not ineffective just because its beds are filled with ill people; likewise, the church.

As one freely receives the grace of God in one’s own stumble to spiritual maturity, one is to freely extend such amazing grace to others. The beloved disciple said, “If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. [qvb://0/anchor/21](#)And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 Jn. 4:20-21 NIV).

In Christ, even the realities of persistent church conflict and rival factions are breeched as the Apostle Paul appeals to the believers’ shared *koinonia* with the Lord Jesus.²⁸⁸ Jesus Christ and “fellowship with the Spirit” are the source of church unity (Phil. 2:1). Our capacity to love and forgive comes from God who first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). We are blessed and able to genuinely love others the more vivid and current our awareness of God’s infinite love for us is. As Paul wrote the Ephesians, “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, [qvb://0/anchor/18](#)may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, [qvb://0/anchor/19](#)and to

know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19 NIV).

True Christian community will “rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15 NRSV). The family of God is the place to find deep friendship; people who, as the Proverb says, love “at all times” (Pv. 17:17). Love is not jealous of another’s success but genuinely celebrates with them. These people are fun, full of joy, and truly are for you.

Love is most cherished in a time of trial. Love remains available and supportive when life turns sour. Paul wrote his friends in Corinth, “just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort” (2 Cor. 1:7 NIV). Paul shared in the plight of the churches he established (2 Cor. 11:28). Paul introduces us to a deeper walk with Christ as he longed to know not only the power of Jesus’ resurrection, but also “the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10 NIV). Paul did not suffer in isolation, but shared with the Christian community his despair, his comfort and his passion for Christ and spreading the Gospel.²⁸⁹ Paul’s testimony of being “hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; [qv:b://0/anchor/9](#)persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” introduces believers to the all-surpassing power of God at work in Christ’s humble disciples (2 Cor. 4:7-11 NIV). Suffering and deprivation for Jesus’ sake weans believers from worldly treasures, establishing within them an appreciation for true riches (Hb. 10:33-36 NIV) The Christian community affirms this truth each time they share in the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of communion (1 Cor. 10:16).

Growing Through Community

True Biblical community requires honesty and openness. For many, weekly worship, Sunday school and other church gatherings are the only times they encounter Godly people with Godly values. Their Christian fellowship is an oasis of encouragement and hope as they cope in a broken, secular world. God has called His children into community. Interdependent community is so basic to being a disciple of Jesus that He calls the church the “Body of Christ.” In order for the Body to be healthy, believers not only connect with Jesus, the head, but also with every other part of the body.

It is impossible to love those “sandpaper people” (who rub us the wrong way) consistently on one’s own strength. Marva Dawn notes, “The more we put ourselves under a performance principle, the more our failures make us feel guilty and cause us to love less.”²⁹⁰ Only when we are set free from performance-oriented self-effort can we “discover the Hilarity of living in love through faith. Indeed, this is not of ourselves, but a gift of grace.”²⁹¹

We are to “live by the Spirit,” that is, to live “in response to God” rather than simply reacting to other people.²⁹² This requires practice and prayer as believers unlearn self-directed living to “live freely, animated and motivated by God’s spirit” (Gal. 5:16 MSG). Consider a balloon that can be twisted into the shape of a dove. This requires real skill, effort, and risks exploding the balloon, which is under tremendous pressure. Another way to have a balloon like a dove is

to shape the rubber as the balloon is manufactured, so it naturally fills into the desired shape.

“God’s highest purpose for you,” Ken Sande says, “is not to make you comfortable, wealthy, and happy... he has something far more wonderful in mind for you—he plans to conform you to the likeness of his Son!... Conflict is one of the many tools that God can use to help you develop a more Christ-like character... the ‘ABC of spiritual growth’—Adversity Builds Character. As you worry less about *going* through conflict and focus more on *growing* through conflict, you will enhance that process and experience the incomparable blessing of being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ.”²⁹³

Nathan loved David so much he was willing to tell him the truth and risk not only the relationship but his own life (2 Sam. 12:1-13). Bonhoeffer said, “Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency that abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than a severe reprimand that calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin.”²⁹⁴ As Scott Peck puts it, “A life of total dedication to truth also means a life of willingness to be personally challenged. But the tendency to avoid challenge is so omnipresent in human beings that it can properly be considered a characteristic of human nature.”²⁹⁵ Alcoholics Anonymous says, “We change when the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of changing.”²⁹⁶

When confronting someone, be aware of any darker motives such as trying to fix the other person or trying to punish them. Gary Smalley says, “the problem you have with another person is often the problem you have with yourself.”²⁹⁷

It is hard to accept others, especially active believers in the church, who have not fully died to self, who come with attitude, an agenda, or who brazenly live out their unfinished sanctification. Acceptance does not mean one condones sin, but simply recognizes the worth of each individual. Abrasive, boastful “sandpaper people” are usually compensating for their insecurities, hurts or other unresolved issues. Too often the church has hurt such people in the past. The love of Christ within us enables us to see them, not as irritants, but as brothers and sisters in need of a healing community of Grace.

Transparency and honesty are essential to accountability. Jesus calls us to “first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Mt. 7:5 NIV). This does not mean, as some misconstrue this passage, that we should never confront our neighbor about an offense. Rather, we should carefully examine ourselves first, purify our hearts, so we can “care fully” as we listen and attend to our neighbor.

Jesus was willing to face the temporary pain of confrontation rather than acquiesce to a false peace. He asked a woman to call her husband and called religious people “whitewashed tombs”.²⁹⁸ The church confronted the inequitable treatment of widows (Ac. 6:1-7) and Paul confronted Peter about his acquiescing to legalists (Gal. 2:11). Every growing Christian needs someone to tell them the truth.

Trust requires honesty, relating consistently and openly over a period of years with other committed believers. Gorman observes, “honesty will inevitably lead to conflict.”²⁹⁹ There is “pain in proximity.”³⁰⁰ Bonhoeffer said this is why

“so many love the idea of community more than the experience of community.”³⁰¹

Gorman assures that “true community provides the security and boundaries to work through conflict in the climate of committed love.”³⁰²

Church fellowship is not perfect. Sometimes, those you invest in will turn on you, or mess up when especially needed. Jesus faced this with the Twelve, as has every church leader since.³⁰³ However, imperfect people are all that are available here on earth. Some would just as soon be left alone as be hurt again.

Violations against community are everyday occurrences. None-the-less, Jesus invites us into community with God and one another. Godly community brings support in trying times, wisdom in life’s choices, prayerful, honest feedback, and the grace to repair and rebuild the broken pieces of life.³⁰⁴ Ultimately, spiritual growth did take place in the lives of each of the eleven disciples. Each went on to share the Gospel, unflinchingly, even at the cost of their very lives. Spiritual growth is not all-at-once. It takes time. Authentic spiritual growth is intertwined with real community.³⁰⁵

Too often mistreatment from church members serves as one’s excuse to chill one’s spiritual life and involvement. One may accept persecution from unbelievers, but being hurt by a member of God’s family is disillusioning. The Psalmist expressed it this way, “If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him.[qvB://0/anchor/13](#) But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend,[qvB://0/anchor/14](#) with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we

walked with the throng at the house of God” (Ps 55:12-14 NIV). Broken fellowship hinders the church’s testimony and advance of the Gospel.

Failure is not the unpardonable sin. Fellow believers will disappoint us. Every one of Jesus’ disciples failed Him in His moment of need.³⁰⁶ Rather than succumb to Satan’s way of separation, shame and distance, all but Judas Iscariot found a way to “get over it,” embracing and extending Jesus’ forgiveness. These unified disciples were an answer to Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, “may they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (Jn 17:23 NIV). In choosing God’s way of unity, they were able to live out their love for each other amidst very real struggles and disappointments. Their dedication to community enabled, not merely 12, but 120 praying intercessors in the upper room on Pentecost Sunday. God blessed their devotion with the outpouring of His Holy Spirit in a rush that swept them out of the upper room and into the streets of Jerusalem resulting in 3000 new believers added to their fellowship in a single day. Loving relationships prepared the seedbed for the Pentecost revival by enabling them to come together in prayer despite failure, disappointment and loss. God delights in community; in oneness. Peter, the anointed preacher on that Pentecost Sunday, later reflected, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Pt. 4:8 NIV)

Reconciliation in the family of God is a life-stopping priority. Jesus went so far as to say, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [qvb://0/anchor/24](#) leave

your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Mt. 5:23-24 NIV). Unity is essential for one to truly worship God. Make peace with your brother or sister in Christ. Church harmony comes before worship, even before your offering! The world is watching the character of each congregation. Genuine love and unity turns heads in our cynical society.

Small Group Bible Study

And

Leaders' Guide

A message to small group facilitators:

God's written word is living and active, designed to be put into practice in the lives of God's people. The following study questions are prepared for your church to gather in small groups of up to 12 people each to discover together how God's truth can be applied in your life together. Committing to meet in groups helps us to integrate God's truth in our lives. Just like finding an exercise buddy helps us live a healthier life physically, a small group encourages us in our pursuit of spiritual maturity.

The series of questions for each chapter are more than enough for one group session. Please do not attempt to discuss every question! Group facilitators are urged to choose those questions most conducive to addressing the needs and goals of your group.

More than "correct" answers, prod the group to embrace God's vision. Pray that the insights from God's Word will transform the culture of your church to reflect a Kingdom perspective. Invite the Holy Spirit to anoint each session and to continue to transform each member long after the sessions are concluded.

1: Empowering Leadership

Small Group Bible Study

As Solomon assumed leadership over Israel, the quality of his character was revealed as he asked God for wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:7ff.).

Read Proverbs 2:1-11.

1. How earnestly does this text urge one to seek wisdom?
2. What words does Solomon use in vss. 1-5 to describe one's quest for wisdom?
3. What benefits of wisdom does Solomon mention in vss. 6-11?
4. Where does a leader, or potential leader, search for wisdom?
5. What has helped you in your quest?

Think of the leaders you admire.

6. How important is a leader's character?
7. How can one develop better character?
8. What are some ways to safeguard one's character?

Jesus, the Master Mentor, empowered his disciples for leadership. After 3 years with Jesus, Peter desperately wanted to do right, yet his character was not mature enough to stand under pressure (Matthew 26:69-75).

Read John 21:15-19.

9. Why did Jesus ask Peter essentially the same question three times?

10. Who really needed to know the answer?

11. What does this scripture teach you about your own character development?

12. Jesus empowered ordinary, fallible individuals to carry out significant Kingdom ministry. Read Matthew 28:18-20. How does Jesus' vision inspire you?

13. How does the support Jesus provides in vs. 20 empower you for the assignment given in vs. 19?

Read Acts 6:1-7.

14. Do you see situations that arise in church as problems or as opportunities to implement God's principles?

15. What steps did the apostles follow in addressing this situation?

16. What criteria did the early church use to determine who would be empowered to serve in this leadership capacity?

17. The apostles had a clear grasp of the limits of their calling (vs. 2). What was the outcome of their empowering others to lead?

Small Group Leaders' Guide

1: Empowering Leadership

Warren Bennis said, "Leadership is not so much the exercise of power itself as the empowerment of others."³⁰⁷ This is the healthy leadership revealed in the Bible, from God empowering Adam to tend the garden and name the animals, to Jesus empowering 12, then 72 to preach, heal and cast out demons.

Secular leadership experts are fluent in leadership strategies, but confess they come up short when it comes to equipping leaders with the most crucial leadership trait: character. Biblical Christianity uniquely equips us as believers to instill Godly character. As Paul mentored Timothy, "set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."³⁰⁸

King Solomon inherited the nation of Israel at the zenith of her power. This study opens considering how crucial character and wisdom are in leadership. Question 8 asks the group to brainstorm ways to safeguard character, as Solomon himself, as well as his father David, demonstrated lapses in character that proved costly.

Questions 9-11 show Jesus developing character and helping a leader (Peter) after he has blown it. The process of repentance and, when appropriate, reinstatement after failure, is a crucial element in Gospel ministry.

Empowering those who know they are fallible, as well as delegating responsibility are key challenges facing Christian leaders. Question 15, based on Acts 6, shows the apostles calling a "congregational meeting," delegating leadership to those recommended by the church's "personnel committee," based on clearly stated character traits (Acts 6:3). The apostles were clear of the limits of their own calling (Acts 6:4) and commissioned these new leaders. Empowering leaders resulted in a growing revival (Acts 6:7).

2: Gift-oriented Ministry

Small Group Bible Study

1. What different jobs have you had?

2. Name what you liked best about each one.

3. What has been your most satisfying achievement?

4. The Bible lists various spiritual gifts¹⁰⁷⁶, including:

Prophecy	Service	Teaching
Leadership	Mercy	Wisdom
Knowledge	Discerning of spirits	
Healing	Miracles	Helps
Giving	Tongues	Faith
Apostle	Interpreting Tongues	
Evangelist	Pastor	Celibacy ¹⁰⁷⁷
Hospitality ¹⁰⁷⁸	Exhortation	Administration

Choose a gift above that has your name on it.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

¹⁰⁷⁷ 1 Corinthian 7:7

¹⁰⁷⁸ 1 Peter 4:9 Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts...* 69-73.

Explain your choice.

6. What job or ministry, given the right circumstances, would be irresistible for you?

7. Take time to affirm each individual in the group. Affirm the strengths and gifts you see in that person. Don't overlook anyone.

8. What spiritual gifts are evident in your congregation?

9. Discuss what God may want to do with those gifts.

Pray for God's guidance.

10. Remember 1 Corinthians 12:7, "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Does your spiritual gift build up other believers? If so, how?

11. Could you mentor another person as you carry out your mission?

12. Read Romans 12:1-2. How can you offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice in daily life?

13. How does this relate to using your spiritual gifts?

Small Group Leaders' Guide

2: Gift-oriented Ministry

Purpose: To help participants discover their spiritual gifts and vision for ministry in the Body of Christ.

Prayerfully anticipate Question 9, allowing plenty of time to affirm the gifts or character traits evident in each participant. This exercise could be the most life-impacting experience for many group members. This act of affirmation could have the effect of "laying on hands" (2 Timothy 1:6) or commissioning one for ministry. Many parishioners see themselves as spectators. Significant ministry is for someone else. Here is an opportunity to empower the saints to recognize God has gifted them and called them to significant ministry.

For those who know about spiritual gifts, the question remains, are you using your spiritual gift to build up other believers? Is anyone coming to maturity through the exercise of your gifts? Mentoring is basic to Jesus' discipleship ministry and evident in the Apostle Paul's ministry, especially his relationship with Barnabas and then with Timothy.

After the first opening question, the group may want to break into triads to share jobs they had and what they liked about each one. It is important that everyone get a chance to share at least 2-3 experiences. Time will not permit a large group to do this. It may be

work to pair up triads to do the affirmation. Ideally, a group of 6-7 can affirm everyone present.

3: Passionate Spirituality

Small Group Bible Study

- 1. What in life are you passionate about?**

- 2. When do you feel most alive?**

- 3. What does this reveal about the deep desires of your heart?**

Read Mark 12:30-31

- 4. Why are these two commandments the greatest?**

- 5. How do the Ten Commandments relate to these two?**

- 6. What do these commandments reveal about God's priorities?**

- 7. In terms of loving God, your neighbor and yourself;**

Where are you the strongest?

The weakest?

8. What have you found helps your love to grow for each?

9. When I love God with my whole heart, I realize that sin breaks God's heart. How does this affect my attitude toward sin?

10. How does this realization affect my attitude toward pursuing holiness and a deeper relationship with God?

"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. [qvb://0/anchor/6](#)I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." - John 15:4-5 NRSV

11. What does "abiding" in Christ look like in your life?

12. On a scale of 1 to 7, what is the temperature of your love relationship with Jesus?

13. What does Jesus think about lukewarm?

14. How is your prayer life?

15. What have you found makes your prayer time more meaningful, more passionate, more motivating?

16. What could you do to raise the spiritual passion in your church?

Small Group Leaders' Guide

3: Passionate Spirituality

Purpose: To help participants discover the necessity of spiritual passion and to develop a more passionate relationship with Christ personally as well as to offer insight and motivation for participants to take action to help their congregation develop a more passionate spirituality.

Leader preparation: What does Jesus mean to you after coming through a difficult time?

What does Jesus mean to you as you face your current challenge?

This is as personal as your walk with Christ. It is one thing to share someone else's testimony of healing or someone else's comfort in a time of grief. One can borrow "lines" from other people, one can steal ideas, small group lesson plans, "killer" stories or quotes. The one thing one can't borrow is passion. This is like the five unwise virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) who didn't have enough oil for their lamps. They asked

those with the oil to give them some. "No! We can't!" There is something that others can't give someone that everyone must have. The virgins' oil is a reference to the Holy Spirit. God gives freely to His children who ask (Luke 11:13). He gives good gifts. He is not going to give a stone to those who need bread. But one must ask. One must cultivate this relationship. One must personally receive and reciprocate His love. One must become passionately involved - personally - with the Lover of one's soul.

4: Functional Structures

Small Group Bible Study

1. What three words best describe the character of your church?¹⁰⁷⁹

2. If you knew you could not possibly fail and would never lack the resources, what would your church be doing if it were really doing the will of God?

Read Exodus 18:1-12

3. What evidence is there to suggest Jethro and Moses shared a positive relationship?

Read Exodus 18:13-26.

4. Can you find evidence that Jethro respects his son-in-law?

5. What was the outcome of Jethro's critique of Moses' procedures?

6. How did you react the last time you were criticized by your in-laws?

Your boss?

¹⁰⁷⁹ Questions were inspired or adapted from Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1999) 74-83.

Your spouse?¹⁰⁸⁰

7. How do you wish you would have reacted under those circumstances?

8. Whose criticism do you receive the best?

9. How do they get through to you?

10. In your own spiritual leadership, how do you decide when to delegate and when to do it yourself?

11. How high does the "in basket" get before you shuffle it to others?

12. How much hands-on control do you absolutely need to retain your motivation or ability to get the job done?

13. How do you feel about releasing control over all details for which you are still ultimately responsible?

22. What makes it so tough to let go?

¹⁰⁸⁰ Serendipity Bible page 132-133

Small Group Leaders' Guide

4: Functional Structures

Purpose: To help participants understand the purpose of the church and to motivate them to take responsibility for their church's effectiveness in fulfilling its distinctive role in the Kingdom of God.

Leader preparation: Jesus established the church (Matthew 16:18) and gave clear direction for the church's purpose, such as in the following verses (see also Philemon 1:6, Philippians 2:14-16, Ephesians 5:25-27):

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [qvb://0/anchor/19](#) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [qvb://0/anchor/20](#) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20 NIV.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom,
so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. Colossians 1:28

NIV

One purpose statement: Jesus Christ established the church to spread the Gospel (bringing unbelievers to faith in Christ) and to mature believers to holy living and contagious evangelism.

Many times church leaders, lay leaders as well as clergy, shirk their responsibility to maintain a faithful church effectively pursuing God's purposes. Whether respect for "tradition" or "past generations" or extenuating present circumstances, the current leadership is responsible to see that the church functions effectively. As the individual entrusted with a single talent learned, we are accountable, not for the amount or quality of what we received, but for what we do with what we have.¹⁰⁸¹ Like the first humans in the Garden of Eden, passing blame is no substitute for personal responsibility.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁸¹ The parable of talents is found in Matthew 25:14-30.

¹⁰⁸² Adam blamed "the woman You gave me" and Eve excused herself blaming "the serpent deceived me." All three were held responsible for their actions in Genesis 3:1ff.

Read Exodus 18:1-12

What evidence is there to suggest Jethro and Moses shared a positive relationship?

Mutual affection, time together, mutuality (Vs. 7)

Jethro celebrated Moses victory, listened to his exploits. (8-9)

Jethro, this priest of Midian (Exodus 18:1) makes a profession of faith in God and offers a burnt offering to God. (10-12)

Read Exodus 18:13-26.

Can you find evidence that Jethro respects his son-in-law?

Jethro begins the conversation by asking a leading question. (Verse 14)

offering his candid opinion and reasons for it (17-18)

offers advice (19-23) and

offers the benefits of considering his recommendations (23).

Moses carried out Jethro's recommendation with positive results (24-26)

5: Inspiring Worship

Small Group Bible Study

1. When have you had a particularly meaningful worship experience? What made it meaningful?

Read Luke 7:36-50.

2. A woman "who had lived a sinful life" (vs. 37) crashed this Pharisee's dinner party with Jesus. What, do you gather from the passage, motivated this uninvited guest to risk public criticism to approach Jesus as she did?

3. What significance do you see in the specific actions she performed (vs. 37-38)?

4. Have you ever witnessed or done something like this woman did to Jesus?

5. Share your feelings about that experience at the time.

6. Do you view it any differently today?

7. A similar anointing is found in John 12:1-8. There, Judas Iscariot objects to this extravagant act of worship, noting the money would have been better spent helping the struggling poor. What expressions of worship do you view as "over the top"? Why?

8. Discuss the effect of Judas' attitude on one's approach to worship.

9. Have you experienced a time when God's mercy and forgiveness were especially vivid to you that stirred a desire deep within to worship God?

10. What made that worship experience different than other times?

11. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, "whole self worship"?

Read Matthew 26:36-46

12. Describe what Jesus' "whole self worship" of God involved in the Garden.

Speaking of this moment, Jesus declared, "Father, glorify your name." (John 12:28). Jesus endeavored to glorify God through the costly obedience of offering Himself in full submission to God to the point of death on a cross. Jesus' active devotion to God revealed God's glory, God's purpose, and redeemed the human race: all who trust in Christ through faith.

The Message translates Romans 12:1, "Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him."

13. What does this teach you about "whole self worship"?

Small Group Leaders' Guide

5: Inspiring Worship

Purpose: To help participants deepen their personal preparation for worship and to discover ways to enter into whole-self worship.

Leader's Preparation: Jesus introduced the Gospel by calling people to repentance (Mark 1:15). Repentance involves one's whole self. The woman "who had lived a sinful life" in Luke 7 illustrates whole-self worship. Perhaps you have encountered someone choked up over something that did not seem like a big deal to you. While there are over-dramatic people in life, each of us must guard against the callousness of this Pharisee in Luke 7. Those uninhibited in their extravagant worship draw criticism (see John 12:1-8). Question #4 invites us to recall past experiences expressing profound brokenness, grief, or gratitude for God's forgiveness.

Question 7 cites John 12:1-8. Judas objects to this extravagant worship. What expressions of worship do you view as "over the top"? Why?

Some ideas: clap hands, raise hands in worship, dance in the aisles, pray aloud while the pastor prays, speak in tongues, swing incense, shout "amen!"

8. Discuss the effect of Judas' attitude on one's approach to worship.

Consider the effect this discouraging attitude had on Judas himself, on others watching, on expressive individuals such as this woman.

Expressed disapproval and guilt can cause some to hold back their emotion, to carefully measure their expenses, time, or energy expended in worship, children's or youth ministry. Although couched in noble, reasonable explanations, this attitude results in keeping one's faith limited, restrained, safe, predictable, and uninspiring.

11. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, "whole self worship"?

Participatory, lifestyle, genuine, heart-felt, moving, authentic, extravagant, over the top,

12. Describe what Jesus' "whole self worship" of God involved in the Garden.

Surrendering his will to God's will to the point of sacrifice, suffering, and death. Jesus chose to believe God in a personally costly way.

6: Holistic Small Groups

Small Group Bible Study

"So we continue to preach Christ to each person, using all wisdom to warn and to teach everyone, in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature person in Christ." - Colossians 1:28 NCV.

1. Think of a time when you experienced a spiritual "growth spurt." What were some of the factors that helped you grow?

2. What would help you now in your pursuit of Christian maturity?

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [qvb://0/anchor/12](#)to prepare God's people for *works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up [qvb://0/anchor/13](#)until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become *mature*, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." - Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV (*italics added*).

3. How are "works of service" related to spiritual maturity?

In the Great Commission, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [qvb://0/anchor/19](#)Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [qvb://0/anchor/20](#)and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." - Matthew 28:18-20 NIV.

4. Jesus instructed His disciples, then and now, to "go," "make disciples," "baptize," and "teach." Which of these four commands is central?

5. How is your church implementing Jesus' instructions?

George Barna observes, "Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program or set of activities, but stunningly few churches have a church of disciples."¹⁰⁸³

6. Where do you see Godly disciples emerging from ministries in your church?

7. What else could your church do to "make disciples"?

8. What is your next step toward maturity as a disciple of Jesus?

8b. How would you introduce yourself without using your name, your occupation, or title?

¹⁰⁸³ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2001) 20.

- 8c. How prominent should "follower of Christ" be when you identify yourself to others?
9. How can your involvement in a small group be used to carry out the Great Commission?
10. How would this Great Commission-oriented small group be different than other small groups you have known?
11. What obstacles stand in the way of this small group becoming a reality?
12. How can those obstacles be overcome?

Small Group Leaders' Guide

6: Holistic Small Groups

Purpose: To help participants understand the purpose and value of holistic small groups and to consider initiating holistic small groups or making their existing groups more holistic.

Leaders Preparation: The gift of pastoring is not limited to clergy. Churches are populated with laity with the gift of pastoring. In fact, research indicates "this is one of the most widespread spiritual gifts, but it is often not exercised because of the misconception that pastoral ministry belongs to the classical tasks of a pastor."¹⁰⁸⁴ Nurturing believers in the truth is vital to discovering and utilizing spiritual gifts in ministry and otherwise applying God's word in real life. Small groups that actively care for the souls of its participants are key to maturing one another in the faith.

This session invites your group to brainstorm ways to make your group more holistic. God made us all different. Resist the temptation to have every group in your church following the same curriculum. Even a Bible study can be a casual, more community-building experience, topical, or an intensive progression through practical theology complete with scripture memory, and outside homework.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998) 97.

Most Christians know more scripture than they put into practice. Service-oriented groups gather for prayer and Bible study, but are committed to an outreach ministry, whether supporting senior citizens, tutoring at risk children or feeding the poor.

Reaching seekers requires an approach sensitive to their needs. Most groups, except a covenant, in-depth disciple-making group, should have an "open chair" to fill with newcomers. This rewarding outreach often ignites a passion for the lost when group participants realize how hungry their unreached neighbors are for fellowship, love and purpose for living.

7: Need-oriented Evangelism

Small Group Bible Study

1. What is the most pressing need in your community?

2. What resources are available to you, your group, or your church to address this need?

3. Is there a practical way you could do something specific to address that need for someone in the near future?

Pray for God's guidance.

4. Think back to how you came to faith in Christ. Was it an instant transformation or a process over time?

5. What needs did you have at that time and how did they affect your coming to faith in Christ?

6. Is need-oriented evangelism different than how you once thought of evangelism?
7. If so, how?

8. Who would you like to introduce to Jesus?
Pray for specific individuals.

9. Read Matthew 9:2-8. Do any of the people listed above have a 'mat'?

10. How can you and some friends carry their mat so they can meet Jesus?

11. The Apostle Paul encouraged his friend Philemon, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." Philemon 1:6
NIV

Christians over time may take for granted the Good News of the Gospel. Relating to unbelievers deepens one's appreciation for every good thing believers have in Christ. What are some of these good things?

12. In your own words, what is the essence of the Gospel we believe and share?

Here are some related scriptures.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [qvb://0/anchor/4](#) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NIV

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23 NIV

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16 NIV

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [qvb://0/anchor/10](#)For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Romans 10:9-10 NIV

Small Group Leaders' Guide

7: Need-oriented Evangelism

Purpose: To focus participants on the needs of friends and neighbors without Christ and ways to personally address those needs.

Need-oriented evangelism is not about my need to witness or win a convert. Need-oriented evangelism is about denying myself, even denying my noble, religious zeal, to humbly focus on the needs of those outside the family of faith with no ulterior motive.

The love of Christ compels us. Love transforms hearts. Love must be genuine, sincere. (Rom 12:9, 1 Peter 1:22)

Rather than a deal (I'll address your need if you'll become my convert) Jesus simply loved and accepted others with a sincere heart. Zacchaeus and the woman at the well are two examples of individuals exhibiting changed lives based on Jesus' pure loving acceptance.

Notice that accepting a person is not the same as condoning destructive behavior. Jesus did not lecture the woman at the well about her lifestyle, but simply asked a penetrating question (John

4:16). In Zacchaeus' case, repentance and restitution spontaneously arose in response to Jesus' unconditional love (Luke 19:8-10).

8: Loving Relationships

Small Group Bible Study

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

1. Who are the three people who love you most?

2. How do you know that they truly love you?

3. Love does not come naturally to us. People naturally look out for themselves. Jesus teaches here that God wants us to invest our life on earth considering how to love others like we love ourselves. I am careful to decide what I want. Do I seriously ponder what would register joy in the heart of others?

4. What evidence do you see that your church provides a loving atmosphere?

5. After welcoming, how are you assimilating newcomers into your church family?

Read Colossians 3:12-14

Apply these 8 virtues to your own loving relationships.

Compassion, or heartfelt mercy, enables us to see the other person's perspective (Phil. 2:1-2) and their truly admirable qualities (Phil. 4:8). When at odds with someone, it is too easy to dwell exclusively on their faults.

Kindness, goodness, generosity. Share with others the grace God has shown us in Christ (Eph. 2:6-7).

Humility enables us to replace defensiveness or anxiety with prayer (Phil. 4:6-7).

Gentleness: courteous, generous, lenient, large-hearted. The grace of Christ actively displayed in us can disarm a tense situation, especially when the other person is stressed. (Pv. 15:1).

Patience, forbearance, steadfastness, endurance. The ability to "hang in there" through difficult times
(1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Bearing with each other imitates God's generous forgiveness shown to us (Psalm 103:8-10).

"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense." (Pv. 19:11 NIV)

Forgive just as God chooses not to mention, recall or think about our sins when He forgives us (Is. 43:25).

Love, genuinely integrate these virtues in your relationships (Rom. 12:9-10). Our highest aim in all this is to choose to love, so the fellowship will be truly united.

6. Which of these virtues do you practice most consistently?

7. Which is the most challenging for you?
8. What do you learn from this passage to help you grow in this way?
9. How did you respond to Henry Nouwen's observation, "Community is the place where the person you least want to live with, lives"?³⁰⁹
10. Ask God to give you a genuine love from a pure heart for each person He leads to your church fellowship.
11. In Eph. 4:15 we are told to "speak the truth in love." Has anyone ever loved you enough to tell you the hard truth in a way that you grew through that experience?
12. What did you learn from that encounter about speaking the truth in love?
13. What makes you hesitant to speak the hard truth?
14. What is the result of trying to love without speaking the truth?

Small Group Leaders' Guide

8: Loving Relationships

Purpose: To motivate participants to deepen their loving relationships and to instill in their congregation a loving climate that embraces everyone and integrates newcomers into the church family life.

Leader preparation: Loving Relationships is the one characteristic where most churches extravagantly overestimate themselves.³¹⁰

We examined the first half of the Greatest Commandment in our third study, Passionate Spirituality (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus taught that loving God with all our being is naturally followed by loving others as deliberately as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40).

Take time to not only study Colossians 3:12-14, but "try on" the 8 "clothes" or virtues listed in that scripture, expanded in your study guide. Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*³¹¹ would make an excellent follow-up study on resolving conflict in a God-honoring way.

Encourage participants to discuss how these scriptures apply in their life situation. Conflict is not necessarily bad. When different

people interact honestly, conflict is inevitable. This study is designed to give us insight into Biblical ways to love authentically and deeply so we can grow to be more like Christ (Eph. 4:15).

"If I see conflict as natural, neutral, normal, I may be able to see the conflicts we experience as tensions in relationships and honest differences in opinion that can be worked through by caring about each other and each confronting the other with the truth expressed in love."

David Augsburger

Caring Enough To Confront

Resources for Further Study

Church Health

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_____. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.

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END NOTES: A CHURCH AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Preface

¹ Mark 4:27-28 NIV

² Mark 4:26-29, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 3:9, 12:27, Eph 4:11-13.

³ Mark 4:28 NIV

⁴ Updates on the ever-expanding reach of Natural Church Development can be found on its website, available from <http://www.ncd-international.org/FAQ-Network.html>; <http://www.ncd-international.org/FAQ-Results.html>; Internet; accessed 18 June 2005.

⁵ Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*. (St. Charles: Church Smart Resources, 1996).

⁶ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995), 17.

⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

⁸ Christian Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How Natural Church Development Can Transform Theological Thinking*. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1999), 112.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Breathe new life: Ez. 37:1-10; transform: Ro. 12:1-2; wholeness: Luke 8:15, Eph 4:11-13, James 1:4-5; God's purpose: Acts 5:38-39, Rom 8:28, 2 Cor 5:5, Eph 1:7-12, 3:10-11, Phil 2:12-13, 2 Tim 1:8-10, Hb 6:17.

Chapter 1: Empowering Leadership

¹¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 664.

¹² An Old Testament illustration is found in Abimelech, who use treachery and murder to gain leadership in Judges 9:1ff.

¹³ The Mizpah in Genesis 31:49 called God to be a witness against any attempted treachery after Jacob and Laban lost credibility with each other.

¹⁴ Moses worshipped God and entered into a covenant with Him after God revealed His Name and character in Exodus 34:6-8

¹⁵ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* [CD-ROM] August 4.

¹⁶ Joseph Stowell, *Proclaim!*, Moody Bible Network, 13 May 2004, available from www.mbn.org/proclaim; Internet.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 8:1-2, 13:2, 8, Philippians 1:9-11

¹⁸ Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:23-24, Luke 6:46ff., Luke 9:54-55 demonstrates Jesus' disciples submitted to His Lordship and learned his perspective in contrast to their own.

¹⁹ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978), 2.

²⁰ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, quoted by Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On to God's Agenda*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 16.

²¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 707.

²² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 707.

²³ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 4:16.

²⁴ Psalm 23:1-2, John 10:2-4, Ephesians 2:10.

²⁵ Genesis 17:1ff, 18:18, 22:18.

²⁶ Staff: Exodus 4:1-5, 14-17; Lead out of bondage: Exodus 3:1ff.

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- ²⁷ Prophets: Isaiah 11:1ff, Micah 5:2; Mary: Luke 1:26-38, 46-55; Joseph: Matthew 1:20-21; Elizabeth: Luke 1:41-45; Simeon: Luke 2:28-35; Anna: Luke 2:36-38; Magi: Matthew 2:1ff; John the Baptist: Matthew 3:11-15.
- ²⁸ Baptism: Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11; Transfiguration: Matthew 17:5.
- ²⁹ Luke 6:12-16, Matthew 10:1-4
- ³⁰ 1 Timothy 4:14, Acts 6:3.
- ³¹ Equip saints for ministry: Ephesians 4:12 NRSV; Discipleship: John 8:31, 13:34-35, 15:5-8.
- ³² Numbers 27:18-23, Deuteronomy 31:14, see also Deuteronomy 31:7, Numbers 11:28, Exodus 24:13, 33:11.
- ³³ Mark 3:14-15 NIV and to heal Matthew 10:1.
- ³⁴ Jerry Cook. *Love, Acceptance & Forgiveness* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1979), 25. quoted in Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls: Moving Beyond Traditional Boundaries* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 120.
- ³⁵ Individualism: A thoughtful synopsis of individuality and its impact on evangelical Christianity in America is found in David Wells, *No Place For Truth: Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 137-186; Isolation: “Isolation and loneliness is a United Way priority” for 2004 quoted in *United Way Of Greater Victoria*, available from <http://www.unitedwayvictoria.bc.ca/isolation.html>; Internet.
- ³⁶ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 80.
- ³⁷ John Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You: How to Help Others Reach Their Full Potential*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995), 2.
- ³⁸ As cited in John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders*, 6.
- ³⁹ Peter Drucker, as cited in John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders*, 11.
- ⁴⁰ John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders*, 15.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*. (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996), 68.
- ⁴³ John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders*, 6.
- ⁴⁴ Privately: Matthew 11:1, 20:17, Mark 4:10; Explained everything: Mark 4:34 NIV, see also Matthew 13:36, 15:15, 16:21, and Luke 24:27.
- ⁴⁵ Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8.
- ⁴⁶ Matthew 22:43, Luke 1:41, 67; 2:25-27, .
- ⁴⁷ Keep being filled: Ephesians 5:18; Keep in step: Galatians 5:25.
- ⁴⁸ Spirit-filled Christians: Titus 3:5, Acts 7:55.
- ⁴⁹ Romans 8:5ff., Galatians 5:16.
- ⁵⁰ Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:15-17 , 1 Peter 2:2.
- ⁵¹ John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders*, 11.
- ⁵² Body of Christ: Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:12, 5:23; Henry and Richard Blackaby as quoted in Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls*, 172.

Chapter 2: Gift-oriented Ministry

- ⁵³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 879. See also 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:11.
- ⁵⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, ed. Jeff Purswell (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 396.
- ⁵⁵ Build up: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:7 NIV. See also 14:12 and Ephesians 4:7, 11-16; Spread the Gospel: Acts 1:8; Further Kingdom ministry: The Apostle Paul said, “You are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:7 NRSV
- ⁵⁶ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 397.

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- ⁵⁷ Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; 7:7; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11.
- ⁵⁸ None lists all the gifts, and no gift is found on every list. Grudem, *Bible Doctrine.*, 398-399. See also J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 224.
- ⁵⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 401. See also Buswell, *A Systematic Theology.*, 225.
- ⁶⁰ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine.*, 399.
- ⁶¹ Ralph Mattson, *Visions of Grandeur: Leadership That Creates Positive Change* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 65-66. See also Romans 12:6ff. and 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.
- ⁶² Mattson, *Visions of Grandeur*.
- ⁶³ Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996), 24.
- ⁶⁴ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 231. (emphasis his).
- ⁶⁵ Chuck Colson, with Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996), 258.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Robert E. Logan & Thomas T. Clegg, *Releasing Your Church's Potential*, revised 4/2000 ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 3-7.
- ⁶⁸ George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Achieving Success Through Shared Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 22.
- ⁶⁹ Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 8:31-33, 16:14 and Luke 9:51-56.
- ⁷⁰ Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls: Moving Beyond Traditional Boundaries* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 67ff.
- ⁷¹ John 14:12, Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:4-8.
- ⁷² As cited in Chuck Colson, *The Body* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996), 253.
- ⁷³ 1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV. See also Isaiah 61:6 and Revelation 1:6.
- ⁷⁴ Helpful insights are introduced and further reading suggested in Peterson, *Church Without Walls.*, 109 f.
- ⁷⁵ J. B. Phillips, as cited in C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 35.
- ⁷⁶ Buswell, *A Systematic Theology.*, 226.
- ⁷⁷ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 401.
- ⁷⁸ Proverbs 3:5-7, Matthew 11:29-30, John 15:4-17, 1 Corinthians 12:26.
- ⁷⁹ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 40; Mattson, *Visions of Grandeur*, 65-66; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.
- ⁸⁰ Peter Drucker as quoted in George Barna, *Growing True Disciples.*, 76.
- ⁸¹ Sid Buzzell, et al, *Leadership Bible: Contemporary Leadership Principles From God's Word*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 1350.
- ⁸² George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Finding Strength in Shared Responsibility*. (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 74.
- ⁸³ Sid Buzzell, et al, *Leadership Bible*, 1167.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Romans 12:6 NIV
- ⁸⁶ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 44; Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus: A Good News Commentary*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 69.
- ⁸⁷ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 176.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 400.

Chapter 3: Passionate Spirituality

- ⁹⁰ Zeal: John 2:17, Romans 12:11, 2 Corinthians 8:22, Galatians 4:18; fervor: Acts 18:25, Romans 12:11.

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- ⁹¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, August 4.
- ⁹² Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 4:12, Acts 15:11, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9-13
- ⁹³ Des Oatridge, *In Other Words*, Mar/Apr 1993, quoted in *Christian Reader*, Vol. 33, no. 6.
- ⁹⁴ John 15:5-11, John 17:20-23.
- ⁹⁵ When asked by the crowd, ““Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”’ Acts 2:37-39 NIV
- ⁹⁶ R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1927), as cited in, Charles Stanley, *The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 34.
- ⁹⁷ This idea is developed practically in a booklet by Robert Boyd Munger, *My Heart - Christ's Home*, New, Expanded Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).
- ⁹⁸ Larry Crabb as cited on Moody Bible Network’s radio program, *Proclaim!*, 19-20 August 2004, available from www.mbn.org/proclaim; Internet; accessed 20 August 2004.
- ⁹⁹ Psalm 103:5.
- ¹⁰⁰ Douglas J. Rumford, *SoulShaping: Taking Care of Your Spiritual Life*. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 328-329.
- ¹⁰¹ Revelation 19:7, 21:2, 9, 22:17, Mark 2:19-20, John 3:29.
- ¹⁰² The Greek word used here, εμεω, is defined as “lit. ‘vomit’; contrasted w. πτυω=spit out” in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 254.
- ¹⁰³ Proverbs 4: 4 NIV, see also Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 119: 2
- ¹⁰⁴ Walter Bauer, “ζεω” Ibid. 337. See also Acts 18:25 speaking of Apollos who “spoke with great fervor” (NIV), or, “with burning zeal” (Bauer), or “great enthusiasm” (NLT).
- ¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Edwards, as quoted by the Evangelical Free Church of America, *Healthy Church*, available from <http://www.efca.org/health/leading/resources.html#spirit>; Internet.
- ¹⁰⁶ Genesis 3:1ff. I am indebted to Larry Crabb for this insight from his book, *The Silence of Adam*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).
- ¹⁰⁷ John Eldridge, *Wild At Heart*, 116.
- ¹⁰⁸ Jeremiah 29:13 NIV, see also Jeremiah 24: 7
- ¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 5:18b; 6:10-18 NIV
- ¹¹⁰ Ephesians 1:15-17 NIV reads, “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” See also Colossians 1:9ff.
- ¹¹¹ Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 16:28.

Chapter 4: Functional Structures

- ¹¹² 1 Corinthians 12:13 NIV
- ¹¹³ John 13:34-15, Romans 12:16, Philippians 4:2-9, 1 Peter 3:8.
- ¹¹⁴ This is illustrated in Paul’s pastoral addresses in references such as 1 Corinthians 1:10ff, Romans 15:1ff, and Philippians 2:1ff, 4:2-9.
- ¹¹⁵ Shepherds: “Feed my sheep” John 21:17 NIV; servants: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.” Matthew 20:26 NIV
- ¹¹⁶ Honor others above self: Romans 12:10; wider fellowship: Acts 2:42-47; humility, tenderness and compassion: Philippians 2:1-4.
- ¹¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:18ff. This theme is also expounded throughout chapters 2-4.
- ¹¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, 1 Peter 2:1-3.
- ¹¹⁹ “Agape” means self-giving love that finds its source in God through Christ. “The believer’s response of faith makes love a human possibility.” From, Trent C. Butler, General Editor. “Love,

In the Teachings Of Paul” *Holman Bible Dictionary*, available in *QuickVerse* vers. 8.0.3 (Omaha, NE: QuickVerse, 2003), [CD-Rom].

¹²⁰ David Shearman, *The Unstoppable Church: A Pattern for the 21st Century* (Kent, England: Sovereign World Ltd., 1995), 137.

¹²¹ Sid Buzzell, Kenneth Boa and Bill Perkins, editors. *The Leadership Bible: Leadership Principles from God’s Word, NIV* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 166.

¹²² Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 75.

¹²³ This idea was inspired by Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2000), 34ff.

¹²⁴ “According to the new figures, the Earth weighs 5.972 sextillion -- that’s 5,972 followed by 18 zeroes -- metric tons. Previous estimates put the globe’s mass at 5.98 sextillion metric tons.”

Pasadena Bureau Chief. “Physicists’ Work Forces Earth to Drop Weight.” Available on http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/planetearth/earth_weight_000501.html, Internet.

¹²⁵ Stardate Online, FAQ, “How fast is the earth moving through space?”

<http://stardate.org/resources/faqs/faq.php?id=8>, Internet.

¹²⁶ Mark 4:26-28 compares the Kingdom of God to a seed that grows “all by itself.”

¹²⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995).

¹²⁸ Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 68.

¹²⁹ John 13:1ff.

¹³⁰ John 3:16, 6:38-40, Acts 2:22-39, Romans 3:21-26, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Hebrews 12:2.

¹³¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 17.

¹³² Jesus said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” Luke 4:43 NIV

¹³³ There are 65 references to the “Kingdom of God” in the NIV New Testament, plus another 31 references to the “Kingdom of Heaven”

¹³⁴ Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls: Moving Beyond Traditional Boundaries* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 14. The author develops foundational insights into the essence of a Kingdom focus on page 47ff.

¹³⁵ Robert E. Logan and Thomas T. Clegg with Jeannette Buller, “Functional Structures,” *Releasing Your Church’s Potential: A Natural Church Development Resource Kit for Pastors and Church Leaders*. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1994), audio cassette 5 of 10. Also in Robert E. Logan, et. al., *Releasing Your Church’s Potential: A Natural Church Development Resource Kit for Pastors and Church Leaders Guidebook* (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 5-5.

¹³⁶ Victor Hugo, quoted in Julie Gorman, *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 284.

¹³⁷ Helpful insights on the distinctive functions of vision and mission statements, including a section on “Testing Your Statement” can be found in George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 38-41.

¹³⁸ Enthusiastic, intentional, innovative promotion of the church’s purpose is summarized in Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995).

¹³⁹ One approach is described in Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 137-152.

¹⁴⁰ Joshua 8:2ff. See also Luke 9:3, 10:4, 22:35-36 and parallel passages.

¹⁴¹ George Barna, *Barna 2000-2001: A Seminar Featuring George Barna* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, Ltd., 2001), 47.

¹⁴² Gemmy Allen, *Management Modern*, “Supervision” 1998. Available from

http://ollie.dcccd.edu/mgmt1374/book_contents/2planning/plng_process/change.htm, Internet.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Jesus asked, “Do men pour new wine into old wineskins?” Matthew 9:17 NIV, making the observation that new innovations require new structures that are designed to adapt to the changes.

¹⁴⁶ Exodus 18:13ff. This idea is developed instructively as well as devotionally in Sid Buzzell, *Leadership Bible*, 91-92.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV. See also Colossians 1:28.

¹⁴⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.” Matthew 24: 9-11 NIV.

¹⁵⁰ Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls*, 126.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 115.

¹⁵² Ron Sider, Philip N. Olson, & Hiedi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 273.

¹⁵³ David Heney, *Motivating Your Parish to Change* (San Jose: Resource Publications, 1998), 57. quoted in Ron Sider, *Churches That Make A Difference*, 272.

Chapter 5: Inspiring Worship

¹⁵⁴ One example is the musical selections offered on Ebay listed under “New Age & Religious,” available at http://music.listings.ebay.com.au/CDs_New-Age-Religious; Internet; accessed 4 November 2004.

¹⁵⁵ George Barna makes the disconcerting declaration, it is “critical that we keep in mind a fundamental principle of Christian communication: the audience, not the message is sovereign.” George Barna, *Marketing the Church* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 145, as quoted in Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship*. (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2002), 222.

¹⁵⁶ The consumer mentality of “shopping around” for a church as well as claiming to be a Christian without committing to a local congregation is relatively recent and “mostly a North American phenomenon” according to William C. Placher, editor, *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 221.

¹⁵⁷ Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 163.

¹⁵⁸ Meister Eckhart, as cited by John Ortberg, *Surrendering Your Life for God's Pleasure*, T. J. Rathbun, Producer and Director [DVD edition] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), Session 1.

¹⁵⁹ Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls: Moving Beyond Traditional Boundaries* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 22-23.

¹⁶⁰ Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 156.

¹⁶¹ N. T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 9.

¹⁶² Job 13:15.

¹⁶³ Patrick Morley, “The Seasons of a Man’s Life.” *Leadership*, Vol. 17, no. 3, available from http://www.preachingtoday.com/index.taf?UserReference=C583ED0659E218C54190E4DC&function=illustration&op=search_pf; Internet, accessed 9 November 2004.

¹⁶⁴ Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999), 17, as cited in Gibbs, *Church Next*, 155.

¹⁶⁵ Robert E. Webber, *Renew Your Worship: A Study in the Blending of Traditional And Contemporary Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 3.

¹⁶⁶ John 6:68-69, 1 Chronicles 16:23ff., Psalm 62, 103.

¹⁶⁷ N. T. Wright, *For All God's Worth*, 1.

¹⁶⁸ John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 146-147.

¹⁶⁹ Calvin asserted the imperative of the Holy Spirit when he said, “[T]he Holy Spirit effects the proclamation of the Word in our hearts, unites us to Christ in the Supper, and inspires our praise and prayer. The Holy Spirit makes the whole up-and-down parabola of worship work.” As cited in Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 147.

¹⁷⁰ Rumford, *Soulshaping*, 190.

¹⁷¹ N. T. Wright, *For All God’s Worth*, 85.

¹⁷² As cited in John L. Thompson, “The Reformation as a Living Tradition.” *Theology News and Notes*, (Winter 2003).

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Douglas J. Rumford, *Soulshaping*, 189.

¹⁷⁵ Gordon Dahl, *Work, Play and Worship in a Leisure-Oriented Society*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 12, as cited in Rumford, *Soulshaping*, 190.

¹⁷⁶ Rumford, *Soulshaping*, 190.

¹⁷⁷ Unbelievers: Acts 2:46-47; believers: Hebrews 10:24-25. Edmund Clowney says it this way, “The heart of spiritual worship is hearing what the Lord says to us, responding to him in prayer and praise, and encouraging one another in his fellowship.” Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, 124.

¹⁷⁸ Romans 12:1-2 MSG

¹⁷⁹ Rick Warren, ed., *Better Together: What on Earth Are We Here For?* (Lake Forest, CA: Purpose Driven Publishing, 2004), 158.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), 103.

¹⁸¹ Eph 1:12 NRSV

¹⁸² Col 3:17 NLT

¹⁸³ 2 Peter 3:11, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 12:14.

¹⁸⁴ Rick Warren, *Better Together*, 158.

¹⁸⁵ Joseph Stowell, *Proclaim!*, Moody Bible Network, 27 October 2004 available from www.mbn.org/proclaim; Internet.

¹⁸⁶ Hughes Oliphant Old, “Why Bother With Church?” *Essentials of Christian Theology*, William C. Placher, ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 239.

¹⁸⁷ Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Leadership*, Vol. 10, no. 3, available from

http://www.preachingtoday.com/index.taf?UserReference=C583ED0659E218C54190E4DC&function=illustration&op=search_pf; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

¹⁸⁸ Revelation 7:12 NIV, see also Rev. 4:8-11.

¹⁸⁹ Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*, 17.

¹⁹⁰ John Fischer, “Longing for Something Old,” *Covenant Companion*, Oct. 1992, quoted in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 37, no. 5; available from

http://www.preachingtoday.com/index.taf?UserReference=C583ED0659E218C54190E4DC&function=illustration&op=search_pf; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004

¹⁹¹ Robert E. Logan and Thomas T. Clegg, *Releasing Your Church’s Potential*, revised 4/2000 ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 6-1.

¹⁹² John Ortberg, *Doing Life Together* DVD Video. *Surrendering Your Life for God’s Pleasure*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), Session 1.

¹⁹³ Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 156.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Webber, *Renew Your Worship*. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 96.

¹⁹⁷ New Yorkers pay \$14.00 for a 20 minute power nap. “New Yorkers Pay to Nap in the non-Sleep City,” in *China Economic Net*, 7 October 2004; available from

http://en.ce.cn/Life/social/200407/10/t20040710_1195911.shtml; Internet; accessed 16 November 2004.

¹⁹⁸ Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next*, 156.

¹⁹⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Spiritual Care," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 33, no. 17; available from http://www.preachingtoday.com/index.taf?UserReference=C583ED0659E218C54190E4DC&function=illustration&op=search_pf; Internet; accessed 9 November 2004.

²⁰⁰ Martin Luther, as cited in Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 91.

²⁰¹ Wright, *For All God's Worth*, 3.

²⁰² Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. 2. (Waco: Word, 1983), 22, quoted by Kent Edwards, *Advancing The Church* D. Min. class notes, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, January, 2002.

²⁰³ Thomas G. Long, "Preparing to Preach," *Preaching Today* (Carol Stream, IL: Preaching Today), audio cassette 170.

²⁰⁴ Anonymous quote from class notes, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, D. Min., "Advancing the Church," January 14, 2002.

²⁰⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, "Why Bother With Church?" in *Essentials of Christian Theology*, William C. Placher, ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 240.

²⁰⁶ John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, ed. Andrew R. Fausset, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1857-1858), 1:7.

²⁰⁷ Mark 6:7ff.; Luke 9:1ff., 10:1ff.

²⁰⁸ N. T. Wright, *For All God's Worth*, 85.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 3.

²¹⁰ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 89.

²¹¹ Rick Warren, "Worshipping Together" alternative message week 6, *40 Days of Community*; available from <http://www.purposedriven.com>; internet; accessed 12 November 2004.

²¹² Resources to aid worship teams include Robert E. Webber, *Encountering the Healing Power of God: A Study in the Sacred Actions of Worship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998). Webber offers brief summaries and thoughtful discussion questions on baptism, confirmation, marriage, anointing, reconciliation, funerals, foot washing and more. The chapters on communion are especially good. A thorough aid implementing biotic principles of Natural Church Development is Robert E. Logan and Thomas T. Clegg, *Releasing Your Church's Potential*, revised 4/2000 ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998).

²¹³ John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 283.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 284.

Chapter 6: Holistic Small Groups

²¹⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as cited in *Christianity Today*, July, 2004, 57.

²¹⁶ Colossians 1:28.

²¹⁷ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2001), 2.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 23, citing Matthew 28:19, italics his.

²¹⁹ Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson. *Building a Church of Small Groups*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 27.

²²⁰ God gave boldness to his persecuted church when they prayed (Acts 4:31). In Acts 6:6 they prayed when they called seven to gift-oriented ministry. The Holy Spirit came in power (Acts 8:15), the dead were raised (9:40), and God's mission to the Gentiles was revealed (Acts 10:9), when God's people prayed.

²²¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest: Selections for the Year*. (Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1963), 184.

²²² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 142.

²²³ Donahue, *Building A Church Of Small Groups*.

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- ²²⁴ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 141.
- ²²⁵ Ron Sider, Philip N. Olson, & Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002).
- ²²⁶ Apprenticing leaders may take place within the group or may be supported by a regional parish. Some churches gather several groups together periodically under the leadership of a trained lay or staff pastor to keep the larger vision before group participants. One example can be found in Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 136.
- ²²⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 141f.
- ²²⁸ Bill Donahue. *Building A Church of Small Groups*. 15.
- ²²⁹ Howard B. Grose, “Give of Your Best To the Master” Public Domain.
- ²³⁰ Life transforming: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4:15-16 NIV; Resist heresy: “Then we will no longer be infants, … blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” Ephesians 4:14 NIV
- ²³¹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 167.
- ²³² These ideas were gleaned from Donahue, *Building A Church of Small Groups*.
- ²³³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 139.
- ²³⁴ George Barna. *Growing True Disciples*.

Chapter 7: Need-oriented Evangelism

- ²³⁵ Sick: Matt. 14:14, Mark 1:41; Blind: Matt 20:34; Hungry: Matt.14:21; 15:32; Shepherd: Mark 6:34.
- ²³⁶ Gene Getz says, “First, every local body of believers is responsible to saturate its community with love and to demonstrate a unity and oneness that provide the basis for verbal communication; to demonstrate a Christian lifestyle in all human relationship, so as to create a basis on which to discuss the life-changing Christ.” in, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, revised ed. (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1984), 69.
- ²³⁷ Ron Sider, Philip N. Olson, & Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 25.
- ²³⁸ Redemption: Ibid, 27; Servant Evangelism: Steve Sjogren, *The Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus with Others* Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, Servant Publications, 1993).
- ²³⁹ Ibid, 101-102.
- ²⁴⁰ Upon meeting Jesus, John 1:41-42 NIV reveals, “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother, Simon, and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means the Christ). Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. “ Andrew introduced the little boy with the loaves and fishes which Jesus used to feed 5000 in John 6:8ff. When some Greeks asked to see Jesus in John 12:20ff. Philip told Andrew who then went to Jesus.
- ²⁴¹ Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 110.
- ²⁴² Matthew 4:25; 8:1; 13:2; 14:13-14; 15:29-31; 19:1-2; 21:8-9, Luke 5:14-16; 8:42; 9:10-11.
- ²⁴³ Philip: Acts 8:5-8; 28-38; Paul: Romans 10:14-15, Romans 15:20-21, Ephesians 3:8; Missionaries: A summary of missionaries who took Jesus to people from Polycarp to Don Richardson is found in Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983); Take Jesus to them: Bill Peale cited Walt Larimore on Moody Broadcast Network radio program, *Midday Connection*, 15 July 2004, available at www.middayconnection.org; Internet, accessed July 16, 2004. Jim Peterson also says, “The days when we could expect the world to come to us are over.” Peterson, *Church Without Walls*, 119.

²⁴⁴ George Barna, *The Barna Update*, May, 4, 2004, available from <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=163>; Internet. Barna further notes in the same article that “The rapidly swelling numbers of unchurched people may be forcing existing churches to reinvent their core spiritual practices while holding tightly to their core spiritual beliefs. It will take radically new settings and experiences to effectively introduce unchurched individuals to biblical principles and practices.”

²⁴⁵ Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls*.

²⁴⁶ Positive effects: Leith Anderson, “A Steady Christian Influence,” *Christianity Today*, August, 2004, 39-42; Population: No county in the United States has more Christians than ten years prior, according to a study by George Barna cited by Robert E. Logan & Thomas T. Clegg with Jeannette Buller, “Need-oriented Evangelism,” *Releasing your Church’s Potential: A Natural Church Development Resource Kit for Pastors and Church Leaders*. (Carol Stream, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1994), cassette tape 8.

²⁴⁷ Ron Sider, *Churches That Make A Difference*, 67.

²⁴⁸ John Ortberg, *Everybody is Normal Til You Get to Know Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) [CD-Rom].

²⁴⁹ Gary R. Sweeten, *Theology of A Caring, Equipping Community* Revised ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Equipping Ministries International, 1991),

²⁵⁰ Sider, *Churches That Make A Difference*, 27.

²⁵¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, ed. Jeff Purswell (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 373.

²⁵² Luke 4:40, Ac 11:29, 2 Cor 8:4, 1 John 3:17

²⁵³ Peterson, *Church Without Walls*, 119.

²⁵⁴ Some small group resources include Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*, Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), William Fay, *Share Jesus Without Fear* Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), or consult the local Christian bookstore for more current studies.

²⁵⁵ The same term is used in Luke 14:27, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

²⁵⁶ Galatians 6:5 NIV The Greek term, ἰδίος is defined as, “according to his own capability” in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 369.

²⁵⁷ Jesus was not content to simply heal the paralyzed man physically, but to share with him and all gathered the forgiveness of sins available through Christ. Matthew 9:6. See also Jeremiah 17:14, Hosea 11:3, and Isaiah 53:5.

²⁵⁸ Michael N. Allen, “New Wineskin-Same Vintage Wine,” in *A Heart for the City*, ed. John Fuder (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 224. as cited in Sider, *Churches That Make A Difference*, 71.

²⁵⁹ Helpful insight on this can be found in Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, second edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 49.

²⁶⁰ William Fay, *Share Jesus Without Fear* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 33.

²⁶¹ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1964), 113.

²⁶² Dick Innes, *I Hate Witnessing: A Handbook for Effective Christian Communication*, Trade edition (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1985), 183.

Chapter 8: Loving Relationships

²⁶³ Acts 4:32, Eph. 4:1-3, Phil 2:1-4.

²⁶⁴ Command: 1 John 3:11, John 13:34; The Greatest Command: Matt 22:38.

²⁶⁵ John Wimber, as quoted in “Natural Church Development.” The Father’s House Vineyard Christian Fellowship, available at <http://www.crvineyard.org/NCD.html>; Internet.

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- ²⁶⁶ Rick Warren, *Better Together*, 49-50.
- ²⁶⁷ James G. Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne M. Bierling, et. al., *Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You: Essentials of Christian Living*. Revised, 2000. (Pasadena, CA: Shepherd's House, 2000), 5.
- ²⁶⁸ Tony Evans notes "about 80-90% of new members become inactive during the first 6 months because no relational bond was established." Anthony Evans, *Spiritual Growth*. (Dallas: Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship), 9.
- ²⁶⁹ Gary Smalley, *The DNA of Relationships: Discover How You are Designed for Satisfying Relationships*. [CD-ROM] (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), Disc 1.
- ²⁷⁰ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 438-439.
- ²⁷¹ Missionaries: for instance, the Apostle Paul in Phil. 4:14-18; Needy believers: the needy churches in Macedonia mentioned in 2 Cor. 8:1-5.
- ²⁷² Ralph P. Martin, *The Family and the Fellowship: New Testament Images of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1979), 35-36.
- ²⁷³ Relationship with God: 1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Philippians 2:1, 3:10, 1 John 1:3, 6; other believers: Psalm 55:14, Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 5:2, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Galatians 2:9, 1 John 1:3, 7.
- ²⁷⁴ Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 24.
- ²⁷⁵ Ibid, 24 ff.
- ²⁷⁶ "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14 NIV See also Philippians 2:1, 3:10, 1 John 3:6.
- ²⁷⁷ Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 23.
- ²⁷⁸ Rick Warren, General Editor, *Better Together: What on Earth Are We Here For?* (Lake Forest, CA: Purpose Driven Publishing, 2004), 28. See also Eph 2:19, Rom 12:10.
- ²⁷⁹ Ralph P. Martin, *The Family and the Fellowship*, 45.
- ²⁸⁰ A. W. Tozer, quoted by Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 23.
- ²⁸¹ Henry Nouwen, as quoted in John Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal, 'Til You Get to Know Them*. [CD-ROM] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).
- ²⁸² John 17:23, Acts 2:43, 47; 4:31; 5:14; 9:28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26-28; 19:8-20; 28:31.
- ²⁸³ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Second edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 44.
- ²⁸⁴ Ibid, 45.
- ²⁸⁵ Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 100-101.
- ²⁸⁶ 1 John 1:7-8.
- ²⁸⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What On Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 140.
- ²⁸⁸ "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9 NIV. See also 10:17 and Ralph P. Martin, *The Family and the Fellowship*, 37.
- ²⁸⁹ 2 Cor. 1:7, Gal 6:17.
- ²⁹⁰ Marva Dawn, *The Hilarity of Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 145.
- ²⁹¹ Ibid, 146.
- ²⁹² Live by the Spirit: Galatians 5:16, 25 NIV; Live in response to God: Galatians 6:8 MSG
- ²⁹³ Ibid, 31.

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- ²⁹⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*. Trans. Daniel Bloesch and James Burtness. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 105.
- ²⁹⁵ M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. 25th Anniversary Edition. (New York: Touchstone, 2003), as quoted by Brian Pedigo, available at http://brianpedigo.com/personal/quotes/road_less_traveled.htm; Internet.
- ²⁹⁶ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries Face To Face: How To Have That Difficult Conversation You've Been Avoiding*. [CD-ROM] (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).
- ²⁹⁷ Gary Smalley, *The DNA of Relationships: Discover How You are Designed for Satisfying Relationships*. [CD-ROM] (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), Disc 1.
- ²⁹⁸ Woman to call her husband: John 4:16; Whitewashed tombs: Matthew 23:27 NIV
- ²⁹⁹ Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 99.
- ³⁰⁰ Mary Wolff-Salin, as quoted in Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 99.
- ³⁰¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as quoted in Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 102.
- ³⁰² Julie A. Gorman, *Community That Is Christian*, 99.
- ³⁰³ Matthew 26:56, Mark 14:50. The Apostle Paul notes how he faced this in 2 Tim. 4:10, 16. Rom. 3:23 still holds true.
- ³⁰⁴ Matt. 18:19-20, Ephesians 6:10-18, Phil. 4:1-9, Col. 3:12-16, James 5:13-16.
- ³⁰⁵ 2 Thessalonians 1:3.
- ³⁰⁶ “Then everyone deserted him and fled.” Mark 14:50 NIV
- ³⁰⁷ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, as cited in Buzzell, et. al., Leadership Bible. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 199) 1264.
- ³⁰⁸ 1 Timothy 4:12 NIV.
- ³⁰⁹ Henry Nouwen, as quoted in John Ortberg, *Everybody’s Normal, ‘Til You Get to Know Them*.[CD-ROM] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).
- ³¹⁰ Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1998) 116.
- ³¹¹ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Second edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

VITA

David Mark Meckley

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David Mark Meckley was born in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania on May 15, 1957. Dave came to faith in Christ and was baptized as a believer in the Waynesboro Church of the Brethren at age 12. Dave and his wife PeggyAnne have four children: EllaMae, Hannah, Charis and Mark.

Dave Meckley graduated from The Pennsylvania State University with a B.S. in Individual and Family Studies in 1979. Dave graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA in 1985. At Gordon-Conwell, Dave was president of his denominational student fellowship for 2 years. He also served as “mayor” of Trailerville, a community of 14 seminary families.

Called as pastor of Christ Church of Beaver Springs, PA in 1985, the church doubled in worship attendance his first 12 years as pastor. Meckley has led numerous denominational and congregational workshops for utilizing his book, *A Church After God’s Own Heart: A Biblical Understanding of a Healthy Church*. Dave is an ordained minister with dual standing in the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches (EARCC) and the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC). The Rev. Dr. David Meckley began his Doctor of Ministry studies in the Advancing the Church track at Gordon-Conwell in January of 2002, graduating in January of 2007.